

Northwest Georgia Workforce Investment System

Strategic Plan

June 2003

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I. Summary

The process of developing the Strategic Plan has been most beneficial to the programs, agencies and organizations involved in the Northwest Georgia Workforce Investment partnership. However, there certainly were times when we wished for one less meeting to attend. Concurrent with organizing the Northwest Georgia Workforce Investment Board (WIB), the Coosa Valley / North Georgia Council of Chief Elected Officials (CCEO), and the newly designated one-stop system, the region began experiencing dislocations and plant closures. We went from coping not only with an economy shift from manufacturing to service and retail but having to respond to a slowing economy. Previous dislocations had generally impacted new hires and high school dropouts; we now found ourselves providing services for college graduates. With our partners, we worked to reinvent skills training to meet the changed needs.

Change was every where. While we transitioned from the Job Training Partnership Program to the Workforce Investment Act, our partners in Rehabilitation Services and Family and Children Services were undergoing reauthorization and/or reorganization. Through all the change and reorganization, we worked diligently to strengthen ties with our partners in the one-stop system and the community.

The process of Plan development enhanced our efforts to progress from being reactive to focusing on a proactive mode. We moved from merely planning how to assist individuals in today's economy to long-term planning. That is, anticipating where the economy and employment opportunities will be not just in two years but in five, ten, and fifteen years from now. We also realized that in the past most of our focus had been on our trainees whereas we needed to enhance our business services and work more closely with business and industry in order to be better prepared for the future.

As we move forward our focus will be on increasing the WIB s / CCEO s leadership role in workforce development, strengthening and expanding partnerships and the one-stop system, and continuously improving the system and the services we offer to individuals and businesses.

II. Strategic Planing Process

The WIB, CCEO, Youth Council, and CVRDC staff have worked with multiple partners, agencies, and businesses to develop the strategic plan. Outcomes of the process include, but are not limited to:

- review of all existing pertinent plans to determine assessment of current workforce status;
- development of a process for agencies to share economic information online;
- establishment of committee of area hospitals and medical clinics to meet the industry s shortage of medical staff;
- working with area colleges to fund medical programs with waiting lists which colleges cannot themselves fund;
- working with area colleges to fund programs to serve the training needs of dislocated workers;
- implementation of a local customer satisfaction survey system;
- conducting a survey of needs of business and industry;
- establishing One-Stop Consortia (Operators) Planning Priorities;
- co-sponsoring with the U.S. Department of Labor a survey of Northwest Georgia employers; and
- participating in a regional youth effort where goals were established that are incorporated into this Plan.

The activities adopted in the Five-year Strategic Plan are designed to further the vision and mission and attain the goals of the Northwest Georgia Workforce Investment Board (WIB) and the Coosa Valley / North Georgia Council of Chief Elected Officials (CCEO). The vision, mission, and goals are included on pages 8 and 9.

A summary of the planning meetings are included as Attachment A.

Acknowledgments: The culmination of the Northwest Georgia WIB and CCEO Five-Year Strategic Plan has been made possible through the efforts of many people throughout the fifteen counties in Northwest Georgia. The efforts began in 1996 with the plan to establish a one-stop system in the region, continued with the passage of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, and have continued through the completion of this plan. The Plan is a living body that will continuously evolve to meet the changing needs of our region.

The committees and organizations involved in this effort are recognized and appreciated for their many, many contributions including their attendance at more meetings than they may care to recall. Thank you one and all.

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Area Schools, Agencies, and Organizations

Appalachian Technical College
Chattahoochee Technical College
Coosa Valley Technical College
Dalton State College
Floyd College
North Metro Technical College
Northwestern Technical College
West Central Technical College
Coosa Valley Regional Development Center
Georgia Department of Labor
United States Department of Labor
Department of Labor Vocational Rehabilitation
Department of Human Resources Family and Children Services
Local Chambers of Commerce
Regional Advisory Council
Area Agency on Aging
Family Connections
Tech Prep
United Way
Northwest Georgia Regional Comprehensive Youth Development System and
All area individuals, businesses, and organizations that generously
offered their time and energy to assist with our planning efforts
by contributing to employer and industry surveys.

III. Background

Governance

The Northwest Georgia Workforce Investment Board (WIB) consists of thirty-seven (37) members who bring a varied and strong background in business, industry, government, human services, and employment and training. The WIB and Coosa Valley / North Georgia Council of Chief Elected Officials (CCEO), consisting of member representatives from each of the region's fifteen (15) counties, hold bi-monthly joint meetings. One of the meetings is a joint retreat providing the opportunity for more intense information and planning sessions. The Youth Council, which also meets bi-monthly, provides policy guidance for and exercises oversight with respect to the local workforce development youth system under the guidance of the local WIB and in partnership with the CCEO.

Administration

The Coosa Valley Regional Development Center (CVRDC) has been designated the WIA grant sub-recipient, fiscal agent/administrative agent by the CCEO. The agency is responsible for the budgetary process and for requesting, receiving, distributing, and accounting for all Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funds for the WIB. Other staff responsibilities include, but are not limited to, planning, developing, and maintaining the Plan; developing Requests for Proposals; negotiating and contracting for services; fiscal and program monitoring; evaluation of Individual Training Accounts (ITAs), supportive services, and training contracts; and coordinating WIA services and initiatives with other region organizations. A complete listing of the CVRDC WIA activities is included as Attachment B.

History

Northwest Georgia agencies and organizations have an extensive history of working together to provide for and improve services provided to area residents. With the expectation of federal legislation requiring regions to develop a one-stop system, Northwest Georgia WIB / CCEO took initial steps in 1996 towards implementing a system. Staff began by building upon the successful cluster working relationships that had been functioning successfully for many years. Local agencies and organizations have since formalized the sub-regional collaboratives, and they hold regularly scheduled informational sessions. The informational sessions focus on improving and extending available, limited resources and eliminating duplications where possible. The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) provided funds to further the development of the one-stop system.

An initial grant was provided by the Georgia Department of Labor to assist regions to implement WIA and the one-stop system. Northwest Georgia chose to utilize the funds to provide up-to-date technology for the use of both customers and system partners. For example, computers, printers, copiers, Internet access, and furniture, were purchased to develop Resource areas in partners' offices. Similar items were provided for partners' staff for

preparing informational materials and for familiarity with up-to-date technology. The WIB / CCEO believed it essential for staff to be knowledgeable about the benefits of technology in order for them to convey to customers its importance in today's workplace. In addition to providing equipment and materials, the staff arranged for frequent informational and training sessions, developed a one-stop system web site (CareerDepot.org), and issued a newsletter devoted to articles highlighting services, staff, and customers of all partner agencies. A web site for youth (YouthSuccessAcademy.org) has since been developed.

The designation, in September 2000, of a consortium of partners to be the operators for the Northwest Georgia One-Stop System, has enhanced the previous efforts of the partners and associates to coordinate and integrate services in Northwest Georgia.

Vision

The vision of the Northwest Georgia Workforce Investment Board (WIB) and Coosa Valley / North Georgia Council of Chief Elected Officials (CCEO) is:

to build a world-class workforce that enables individuals to achieve their highest potential; ensures employers have the skilled workers they need to compete effectively in the global economy; and capitalizes on the untapped potential of underemployed and discouraged workers, youth and other job seekers with special needs.

Mission

The mission of the WIB / CCEO is to be a leader in delivering employment and training services that:

facilitate skill development and career mobility,
align with and are of value to our business community, and
enhance people's ability to live and work in Northwest Georgia.

Goals

The goals of the WIB / CCEO are to:

provide a seamless, integrated one-stop service delivery system for individuals and employers;
provide a customer focused system, providing informed choice as a means for customers to determine the level, type, and quality of service(s) they desire;
provide universally accessible information for the general population with wide and easy access to a comprehensive array of information in a variety of formats;
provide a performance-based system with clear outcomes and methods to measure identified performance standards including customer satisfaction;
provide a system promoting continuous improvement utilizing the Malcolm Baldrige criteria;
build a workforce development system that will dramatically upgrade individuals' workplace skills, economically benefitting the workforce, employers, and the State;

eliminate unwarranted duplication of services, reduce administrative costs, and enhance participation and performance of customers served through a quality-driven system; and
establish guidelines for creating and maintaining a cooperative working relationship, to facilitate joint planning and evaluation of services, and to develop more efficient management of limited financial and human resources.

IV. Strategic Plan

Continuous Improvement

A three tier Criteria Chart was adopted by the Northwest Georgia WIB and the CCEO against which the one-stop system and the full-service one-stop centers are measured. The chart, based on the Malcolm Baldrige Continuous Improvement Criteria, establishes specific goals/criteria which are used by the system, centers, and WIB/CCEO to measure progress and continuous improvement. Each Full-Service One-Stop Center and the System Operators prepare an annual report for the WIB / CCEO which addresses their tier level and their progress towards meeting the criteria. The reports enable them to assess areas in which they may need improvement and to maintain their focus on continually improving. A copy of the Criteria Chart is enclosed as Attachment C. The annual report criteria forms are available on the CareerDepot.org web site.

Strategic Plan Action: Full-Service One-Stop Centers and One-Stop System Operators will prepare Annual Reports for WIB / CCEO review.

The WIB / CCEO will annually determine if individual centers and the one-stop system are making satisfactory progress in meeting the criteria.

Economic Planning

At the beginning of the Strategic Planning process, the CVRDC WIA Planner obtained copies of all plans that had been developed by the region's other organizations and agencies. The primary purpose in reviewing the plans was to determine if the plans contained duplicative information and if a means could be developed by which partners could share information and avoid duplication of effort. Agency planners held several meetings and shared source and resource information which proved useful to all parties. In addition the planners agreed that the plans contained localized economic information that would be valuable to the WIB / CCEOs and to other agencies in the region. The committee agreed upon a series of questions which they felt would capture information that would be of value to all parties. They further agreed that an online database would be most useful in making the information available to all parties. The database is posted on the CareerDepot.org web site. The 2002 responses are located at CareerDepot.org/Strategic/planning_questions.htm

Strategic Plan Action: Partner Agencies will annually update Internet-based Economic Planning Database.

Training

Demand Occupations

WIA Staff maintain a list of demand occupations which is frequently reviewed with recommendations made to the WIB / CCEO to add or remove occupations from the list.

Occupations which are in demand but which have relatively low hourly pay require special approval by WIA staff before training will be offered in those fields. The special circumstances which warrant training in the occupation must be detailed in a request for approval. The Northwest Georgia demand occupation list is included as Attachment D.

Medical Fields: The WIB / CCEO has been proactive in working with the Department of Labor and local colleges to encourage dislocated workers to seek retraining in the medical field. Medical occupations (a) have advancement opportunities, (b) will continue to be demand occupations into the foreseeable future, (c) offer relatively high pay, (d) may be the only demand occupations in rural areas which have experienced several dislocations, (e) and will address the needs of both the general populations and the medical community.

Staff are working with a committee of Human Resource managers from the region's medical industry to determine in which areas they have the greatest need for staff and to find ways WIA can work with them to assist in alleviating the shortages. The CareerDepot.org web site now has an application form online where individuals seeking health care positions can post their resumes. The application form was posted in response to their desire to have access to WIA students seeking employment.

The WIB / CCEO worked with Appalachian Technical College and the Trade Assistance Act (TAA) to provide special classes and programs for workers affected by the Levi layoff. The programs included LPN and Customer Services which were the two areas assessed to be in demand in the region. Appalachian Technical College, as is the case with most of our area colleges, had a large waiting list for individuals desiring to enter the LPN program. By covering all costs for the program, the workers were able to start the program and complete while TAA benefits were still available to them. A special short-term Customer Service program was also provided the dislocated workers. Both programs produced excellent wages and after-training employment results. WIA staff are currently working with Appalachian Technical College to provide a similar program for another group of dislocated workers from the area.

In addition to the above, staff are seeking additional funds for special LPN, Paramedics, and EMT programs at Dalton State College. Dalton State College has a waiting list of several hundred individuals for its various medical field programs. Unless special funding is obtained, WIA eligible participants may have delays of months or even years before they can enroll in LPN and other programs.

Teachers: Northwest Georgia has experienced shortages of teachers in the area K-12 system. The shortage has been helped somewhat in the Catoosa, Dade, and Walker counties as experienced teachers have transferred from the Hamilton County, Tennessee, school system to the higher paying teaching positions in Northwest Georgia. However, overall the problem exists through the fifteen counties. To assist area's dislocated workers and other WIA eligible individuals and to address the region's teacher shortage, CVRDC has signed an agreement with Northwest Georgia RESA to identify WIA eligible individuals with bachelors degrees who are interested in and have the aptitude for teaching. Those individuals will be referred to RESA for potential participation in the Georgia Teacher Alternative Preparation Program (GTAPP).

Due to State budgetary constraints, many schools have had to reduce the numbers of teachers and paraprofessionals for this coming 2003-4 school year. However, due to the

population growth in our region and the community-wide efforts to reduce the numbers of school dropouts, we anticipate that this reduction will be a short-term phenomenon and that there will be a continuing demand for teachers in our region. As a result, the efforts with RESA will continue.

Carpet: Northwest Georgia is home to the largest concentration of tufted carpet producers in the United States. Mills located within the region supply 80% of the U.S. carpet market. As noted previously in discussing the decline of the textile industry in the region, carpet has been relatively unaffected. It is crucial to the region's economy that the carpet industry remain stable. Dalton State College is located at the center of the greatest concentration of carpet production in the world. It is one of only two in the University System authorized to offer a full range of technical programs in addition to the traditional pre-baccalaureate curricula and targeted baccalaureate offerings which meet workforce development needs of the Northwest Georgia area. Consequently, WIB / CCEO staff have been working with Dalton State College to determine if there are ways in which WIA can address the training needs of the Industry. With rapidly advancing technology and the high dropout rate in the region, there is a definite need for continuous skill upgrading. Carpeting is a home-grown industry that began as family-owned businesses with ties to and loyalty to the region. The past decade has seen consolidation within the industry. The region can no longer rely on the loyalty to retain the industry in the region, the State or the country. We must have skilled, trainable employees available to help retain the industry's competitiveness with national and foreign markets.

Strategic Plan Action: Continue to seek funding for special medical classes to address the skills shortages and meet the training or retraining needs of dislocated workers and other WIA eligible individuals.

Continue to work with the Health Care Industry to devise innovative ways to assist them in alleviating personnel shortages and having access to qualified, skilled employees.

Identify degreed individuals who are interested in and have an aptitude for teaching. Refer the individuals to GTAPP.

Work with Dalton State College and the Carpet Industry to meet the skills and training needs of the industry and its current and potential employees.

Work with business and industry to explore opportunities to provide customized and incumbent worker training.

Enhance services for small businesses.

Special Populations

Latinos: During the past decade Northwest Georgia has become increasingly diverse. The area experienced a worker shortage in most industries and businesses in the 1990s. Initially Latinos were attracted to the area by the carpet and poultry industries which had large

numbers of entry level, relatively high paying positions. The Latino population has grown from a fraction of 1% to make up almost 6% of the population in our region; they make up over 22% of the population in Whitfield County. Latinos have made great strides in assimilating into the community. One need only note the number of Latino owned businesses to see that many have moved beyond the initial entry level positions. The second generation which attended local schools and colleges have unlimited opportunities due to the demand in the area for bilingual employees.

Due to the relatively low educational attainment (3rd to 5th grade levels) of first generation immigrants, WIA eligible Latinos have generally been served through the On-the-Job Training program. Previously they were not materially affected by dislocations since many were in the economically stable carpet industry; however, in the past six to nine months, Latinos employed in rural counties in non-carpet or poultry related industries, have increasingly been affected by dislocations.

Long-term Unemployed. In 2002, staff obtained statistics from the Georgia Department of Labor regarding the long-term unemployed in our region. We discovered that long-term unemployment did not impact any one group - all age groups, all education levels, male and female, older workers and the young were affected. A new phenomenon to the region was having large numbers of unemployed college graduates. Over 20% of the long-term unemployed in the region are college graduates which is a disproportional percentage. Retraining educated individuals represents a change and a challenge for WIA. However, this is a change that has been sometime coming. With the rapid advances in technology, all individuals must realize they must be life-long learners, will change careers several times, and will routinely need retraining throughout their working careers. The region has made progress in working with degreed workers particularly through medical and computer programs. However, we recognize that there will be increasing need for retraining outside the traditional training programs.

The Disabled: Disabled individuals continue to have the highest unemployment of any population group in the United States. Northwest Georgia is no exception. Strides have been made to accommodate individuals in the workplace, education, and society in general; however, much still needs to be done. WIA has found that the On-the-Job Training programs working with Vocational Rehabilitation counselors as well as staffings in which multiple agencies meet to find the best means to assist individuals in overcoming barriers has worked well. However, as previously noted, much remains to be done.

Dropouts: Although Northwest Georgia has made progress in reducing the dropout rate through the community-wide, multi-agency efforts, the region still has a high percentage of workers and job seekers who possess less than a high school diploma. WIA has been working with many dislocated workers who dropped out of school, have low basic skills, and have worked for the same employer for many years. They have been earning relatively high wages, and similar positions are no longer available in our region. On-the-job training is an option for many who do not want to be trained through a traditional college program, cannot attend college without spending months or years upgrading their skills through adult education, or cannot financially afford to be out of work for extended periods.

Dislocated Workers: Northwest Georgia has been impacted by dislocations since Spring 2000. The economic slowdown for Northwest Georgia has been largely in the manufacturing sector. Particularly hard hit have been the textile industries which have been impacted by foreign competition. Fortunately, except for consolidation of facilities, the carpet industry has been, by and large, not affected by the downturn. The demographics section of this plan contains lists of the areas dislocations. Means that have been taken to retrain workers, including funding career programs, are discussed in other sections of the document

Youth: A separate section has been prepared for youth. See page 21.

Strategic Plan Action: Survey Latino community to determine services needs and develop programs / materials for areas where gaps exist.

Establish stronger ties with Adult Education and English as a Second Language programs.

Work with colleges and related agencies to identify well-paying careers for which training times can be reduced by building upon the skills already possessed by degreed workers.

Work closely with Rehabilitation Services to find innovative means by which disabled individuals may be trained and find self-sufficient employment.

Work with business and industry to identify jobs and careers that will provide a self-sufficient wage for individuals with low basic skills who lack high school diplomas and are not suitable for college programs.

Customer Satisfaction

State: The Georgia Department of Labor has developed a process to assess the level of customer satisfaction with the system for both trainees/job seekers and employers. The process is based on the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) Northwest Georgia has met or exceeded the ACSI for both employers and trainees. The ACSI, however, does not provide information that can be utilized for making management decisions for specific programs and activities.

Trainees: WIA staff developed a customer satisfaction questionnaire that will be sent twice yearly to trainees from the training programs. The first questionnaires were sent Fall 2002. The results, in general, were excellent (see [Attachment E](#)). The survey did reveal that a customer's dissatisfaction with services received from one agency in the one-stop system is reflected in customer satisfaction with the entire system. However, with enough results to be statistically meaningful, areas in which system staff need training will become clearer, and we can incorporate the results into the Operators' staff training and cross-training activities. (See Operators Goals & Objectives [page 19](#).)

The survey mentioned above is for WIA program trainees only. The region has not yet determined if all partners have customer satisfaction indices which can be utilized to measure their programs.

The Department of Labor customer satisfaction for employers is measured at the regional level. All areas within a region share common results. The region has conducted two employer surveys which will be discussed in a separate section of the Plan

Employers: In an effort to develop new training programs for the large number of dislocated workers in the region, WIA staff conducted a labor market survey of the region's fifteen counties. The community sectors surveys in the first phase (See [Attachment F](#) for the entire report.) included Chambers of Commerce, Department of Labor Career Centers, Technical Colleges, City and County governments, and the manufacturing industry.

The results of the first phase indicated that 48% of manufacturing and 40% of public service employers reported that new employees had basic skills deficiencies. Thirty-three percent of manufacturing employers and 0% of public service employers reported social skills deficiencies in new hires. Sixty-three percent of manufacturing employers and 60% of public service employers report job-specific skills deficiencies in new hires.

Respondents were asked specific information about future job openings to provide insight into areas where training may be needed to effectively fulfill growing labor market needs. The greatest future needs in the manufacturing industry as reported by respondents were for entry level/general laborers 56%, technical/computer/highly skilled employees 38%, management 25%, and maintenance general and electrical 16%.

The survey requested the most frequently used methods of recruitment to gain knowledge about the channels through which a prospective employee must go to learn of job postings. Twenty-eight percent reported going through the Department of Labor, and 19% for each reported they used newspaper, TV, and trade journals; word of mouth, employee referral bonus; and recruiters, employment agencies, temporary agencies. Other surveys not associated with Northwest Georgia indicate that the results for word of mouth and employee referrals are much higher.

Part 2 of the Expanding Industry Report was issued in July 2002. This phase of the report was sent to the healthcare community and the daycare through twelfth grade education providers.

The percent of respondents reports new employee skill deficiencies in basic skills were 21% for healthcare organizations and 15% for education providers. The percentage of deficiencies reported for social skills were 1% for healthcare organizations and 8% for education providers. The percent of employers report job-specific skills deficiencies in new hires was 33% for healthcare organizations and 15% for education providers.

Eighty-two percent of the medical offices / hospital responders specified nursing positions (RNs, LPNs, CNAs) as future job openings; 30% reported future openings in support personnel (technicians, dietitians, pharmacists, etc.); and 18% reported future openings for medical office assistants and physician's assistants. The percentages for future openings for Dental/Orthodontic Offices were 60% dental assistants, 30% dental hygienists, and 20%

orthodontic assistant/Lab Technicians. Responders from mental health / addiction treatment centers and miscellaneous medical offices were too low to be statistically significant. The medical related offices reported anticipated vacancies for receptionist/clerical, 34%; accounting/insurance 6%, and network operators/data entry, 5%.

Job openings in the field of education and daycare were reported as follows: teachers 77%, paraprofessionals / CDA (daycare assistant) 31%, CDL bus drivers/food service/clerical/house parent 23%, clerical 15%, and principal/assistant principal 8%.

The initiatives being undertaken in the health, teacher, and carpet industries are included under demand occupations. Training in those areas are designed to meet the anticipated needs of employers.

Usery Center: The Usery Center for the Workplace at Georgia State University conducted a study on workforce development in Bartow and Paulding Counties Fall 2002. The study was sponsored by the U. S. and the Georgia Departments of Labor. The WIB / CCEO were impressed by the results and requested that, to confirm and expand the results, the Usery Center conduct a survey in five counties in the region. The areas which were identified for the survey were:

Ways to elicit earlier notice from employers of anticipated lay-offs, plant closings, and expansions.

Methodologies helpful in identifying companies at high risk for closure.

How to identify future employers moving into the area.

Techniques to educate employers about WIA services

From the four areas mentioned above the Usery Center was asked to conduct a limited, exploratory pilot study to:

Identify the conditions under which employers would provide more advance notice of layoffs, plant closures, and expansions;

Identify factors or conditions that employers believe will affect layoffs, plant closings, and expansions.

Determine what the employers knew about services offered by the One-Stop System.

The results of the survey will be available on or before June 30, 2003 and will be attached to this plan as Attachment G.

Strategic Plan Action: Identify need for staff training as indicated by Customer Satisfaction results and provide opportunities for training.

Determine if all agencies routinely conduct customer satisfaction surveys. Incorporate the results into the region's customer satisfaction reports if they do; if not available, devise means to measure and report the results.

Develop a cost-effective means to measure employer satisfaction with the one-stop system.

Analyze Usery Survey results at the July 2003 WIB/CCEO retreat and identify means to address the results and a process by which employers can provide information to the one-stop system.

Identify means by which the system can effectively market its services to employers.

At least every two years, conduct surveys of area employer segments to assess skill deficiencies of new hires, anticipated future job openings, and/or identify other areas that will assist the one-stop system address the needs of employers.

Technology

Anticipating and recognizing the need for changes in the workforce development system, the Northwest Georgia One-Stop Project was initiated July 1996, two years prior to the implementation of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. Although Internet access was not available to the general public in many of the rural areas in the region in 1996, the partners recognized that technology and Internet access would, in the future, become key to providing information and services to customers and to programmatic staff. In fact, it was particularly important for staff to have access to and to be training in current technology not only to do their work but to convey and its importance to customers. The CareerDepot.org web site went online Spring 1997. It has continually been expanded to provide workforce development and ancillary information to customers, partners, and Board/Council members. Since then, the YouthSuccessAcademy.org web site was developed but has yet to expand to the content level of CareerDepot.org.

When the Georgia Department of Labor made available implementation funds for the regions one-stop systems, Northwest Georgia utilized the funds to provide computers, printers, furniture and other materials to develop resource areas for customers and for the use of staff. The Department of Labor Career Centers, under Commissioner Michael Thumond, have been greatly improved and increased the technology available to both staff and customers. Periodically, when funding is available, the WIB / CCEO continues to provide the opportunity for partners to request and upgrade technology and other materials that cannot be purchased through agency budgets. The funds have been particularly useful in helping agencies prepare marketing and informational materials and in improved communications between partners and staff.

Information that can be shared between partners to reduce duplication of effort has been hampered by partners operating on different systems that do not communicate. Too much time is still spent in having customers repeat information multiple times and in staff having to enter the information into separate systems. The region will not become the seamless system it strives to be until that issue is resolved.

Strategic Plan Action: Intensify efforts, through intelligent utilization of technology, to market one-stop system services to employers and to individual customers.

Work with state agencies to work towards partners being able to share and obtain information online including interaction between agency programs.

Continue to enhance the CareerDepot.org and YouthSuccessAcademy.org web sites with up-to-date information and interactive elements.

Strategic Planning Priorities Specific to One-Stop Operators

The Region I Northwest Workforce Consortium (One-Stop Operators) met on multiple occasions to establish priorities for the Northwest Georgia One-Stop System. The priorities established at the Operators Meeting on November 5, 2002, are listed below. On December 3, 2002, the consortia members met to continue earlier planning efforts. The meeting was facilitated by Wynn Montgomery, Director of Project IDEAS, Kennesaw State University. At the meeting the group discussed the desired state (i.e., defining the ideal referral system). The following definition emerged:

- A simple, effective, non-intrusive uniform process at all locations for making smart referrals to places where customers are eligible for (and can get) the services they need to go to work
- Giving customers all needed information
- Generating feedback on appropriateness
- Documenting the process
- Nobody falls through the cracks!

When comparing the existing system to this ideal, the group concluded that the area s referral system:

- Is not uniform
- Lacks needed level of knowledge of partners programs/services/requirements
- Provides no (or ad hoc) feedback
- Contains no system for documentation.

The group then agreed that the most appropriate way to move from the current situation to the desired state would be to achieve the following:

Goal: To provide appropriate staff in all partner agencies with a working knowledge of all partners programs, services, and requirements.

The group next developed an action plan for accomplishing the desired goal. The key elements of the plan (which have since been achieved) are:

- Provide orientation for Managers and Supervisors
- Remind line staff of overall purpose
- Distribute Fact Sheets on all partner agencies to staff of all partner agencies
- Put Fact Sheets on CareerDepot.org web site
- Get feedback from line staff
- Train staff

The Operators will be developing an action plan for the other priority items Summer 2003.

Strategic Plan Action: Priority I: Information Sharing

- A. For Clients
 - Training Resources
 - Job Openings
 - Client Services Offered by Partners (i.e., partner specific client services)
- B. For Partners
 - Provide/identify what information regarding the partners services that relate to employment/workforce development that should be communicated to clients/potential clients at the One Stop
 - Develop orientation session for other One-Stop Partners to educate them about these services
 - Identify and provide resources (existing or planned) that describe the services
 - Identify key contact information
- C. Staff Development
 - a. Knowledgeable Staff
 - Cross Training
 - Multi-agency Awareness
 - Accurate Referrals (agreed on common procedures)
 - b. Identify who should participate in staff development design/implementation
 - c. Develop Training
 - d. Deliver Training
 - e. Fund Staff Development Activities (Agency or WIB)
 - f. Training Topics
 - Referrals
 - Tracking/documentation
 - Any other as determined by Consortia

Priority II. Referrals

- A. Uniform referral process that ensures accurate referrals
- B. Staff person for each partner to serve on a referral committee
- C. Goal of committee will be to develop a process to ensure accurate referrals between agencies and establish documentation process/protocol to satisfy state and federal reporting requirements

Priority III: Documentation

- A. Develop/define/adopt a documentation process

Priority IV: Development of Additional Full-Service One-Stops

Strategic Plan Activities Specific to Youth

At the WIA Youth Council Planning Retreat held June 20 - 21, 2002 in Dawsonville, Georgia, the Council established the top five critical areas for Youth Council action. The areas, in priority order, are:

1. One-Stop Centers / Services for Youth;
2. Youth Summit;
3. Show Results / Improvement in High School / GED Completion to Businesses and Economic Development (including how WIA affects completion rates, adds value);
4. WIB Support for Stay in School Policy; and
5. How to Assist Kids (both eligible/non-eligible) When No WIA Slots Are Available.

Strategic Plan Action: 1. One-Stop Centers / Services for Youth

- A. Youth should help staff the center
 - Apprentices for Human Services careers
 - Provide peer mentoring
 - Serve as summer interns
 - After school activity
 - Ensure funds are available to support (WIA and others)
 - Teachers do summer externship at the One-Stop
- B. Youth should help plan the One-Stop
 - Have youth visit existing One-Stops
 - Check existing surveys for customer feedback
 - Use county youth councils for feedback
- C. Obtain assistance from current One-Stops
 - DOL Youth Council member will share ideas, discuss, and get feedback at the WIB One-Stop meeting
 - Request assistance from DOL Commissioner who can help in identifying funds
 - Youth Council Chair to discuss concept with Commissioner
- D. Obtain assistance from School-to-Work partners
 - They need to be part of the planning process
 - School-to-Work partners have resources
- E. Find out what information/education school counselors need in order to be able to refer youth
 - Develop a Resource Guide
 - School counselor could serve externship
 - Connect to student service hours/service learning
 - Job shadow at Career Center
 - RESA is a great way to connect to counselors
- F. What services resources should be available?
 - Brochures, annual reports from businesses
 - Actual applications from businesses
 - Coaching and/or a guide on completing an application

- Videos on truth in application, interviewing, etc.
- Video equipment
- Self-directed assessment, interest inventories
- Card sort assessment
- Work Keys
- Asset Building
- Career exploration
- Resume building workshop
- Information on entrepreneurship (ASCS grants for entrepreneurship)
- Bulletin boards for posting jobs
- Ask the customers

- G. What might the center look like? Where might it be?
 - Mobile Career on Wheels could visit schools at all levels (corporate funding)
 - In schools
 - In libraries
 - Part of existing Career Center
 - Links via website
 - Connect to Juvenile Justice

2. Youth Summit

- A. Need regional youth development viewpoint for planning and wider support (Community Partners, Family Connections Youth Councils, WIA Youth Council)
 - Summit is a labor-intensive effort - need a coordinator under contract (then subcontract if necessary)
 - Possible funding source: School-to-Work
 - Determine who should organize the Summit
 - Workgroup will explore organizing options
 - WIA Youth Coordinator will list tasks, budget, potential pitfalls for future organizers
 - Determine what youth to invite; work to ensure minority participation
 - Have local program representatives promote the summit, ensure pre-registration
 - Work out Transportation issues
 - Provide leadership opportunities

3. Show Results / Improvement in High School / GED Completion to Businesses and Economic Development (including how WIA affects completion rates, adds value)

- A. Determine what information can be made available.
 - Compile historical and current data
 - RDCs have software for GIS coding, mapping
 - Adult Education to provide GED information from Adult Education
 - RESA to provide Apprenticeship information
 - WIA Youth Coordinator has WIA information

- B. Determine how to communicate savings that occur when students complete.
 - Prepare an informational presentation
 - Approach Education Representatives on Chambers of Commerce to share information
 - DCS can communicate the information.
- 4. **WIB Support for Stay in School Policy**
 - A. Show what it costs when kids don't complete
 - B. Identify benefits to business higher skills provide support for
 - New industries
 - Dealing with plant closings
 - Small business incubation
 - C. Secure real buy-in and support from WIB
 - D. Prepare an action plan for WIB to go into the community with message of support
- 5. **Assist Kids (both eligible/non-eligible) When No WIA Slots Are Available.**
 - A. Identify service cost per person so slots can easily be purchased by other agencies
 - B. Identify other sources of funds to purchase additional slots for non-eligible kids
 - C. Develop a Memoranda of Understanding for cost sharing among agencies
 - D. Obtain contractor buy-in if need for additional slots is identified after programs are underway
 - E. Educate service providers on cost sharing, cost allocation
 - F. Educate WIA service providers as to which programs can provide services for WIA-eligible youth
 - G. Discuss the issue with State partners as this is a barrier that needs to be addressed across all regions

For the past two years, the Northwest Georgia WIA Youth Council and CVRDC Staff have worked closely with the Northwest Georgia Regional Comprehensive Youth Development System (CYDS). Wanda Williams, WIA Youth Coordinator, arranged the first Regional Youth Summit in the State of Georgia. The Youth Summit was very successful and has continued as an annual event under the auspice of the CYDS. At the Region I (Northwest Georgia) Regional Comprehensive Youth Development System Planning Retreat held June 19, 2002, in Dawsonville Georgia, the following goals and strategies were adopted.

- Strategic Plan Activities:**
- 1. **Increase High School Completion Rate**
 - A. Increase Capacity of Local Collaboration in Best Practices
 - B. Improve Career Development in Schools
 - C. Involve Business in Schools
 - D. Provide Opportunities for Youth to Give Back to Community
 - E. Enhance Mentoring at Local Level

- 2. Increase GED Completion Rate for Youth**
 - A. Asset Building Education
 - B. Outreach/Communication
 - C. Accessibility
- 3. Increase Post-secondary Completion**
 - A. Conferences
 - B. Website Development
 - C. School to Business or Business to School
 - D. Resources
- 4. Expand Career Awareness Opportunities**
 - A. Information Dissemination: Schools/Businesses
 - B. Information Dissemination: Youth
- 5. Increase Job Awareness**
 - A. Youth Involvement
 - B. Business Leaders
 - C. Technical Assistance
 - D. Program Materials
- 6. Reduce Number of Youth Who Abuse Alcohol, Tobacco, Drugs**
 - A. Treatment Programs
 - B. Youth Leadership
 - C. Prevention Seminars (Local)
 - D. Prevention Programs
- 7. Create Appropriate Infra-Structure/Organization**