

# GUIDEPOSTS FOR EMPLOYER SUCCESS

The workforce development system has two primary customers: employers and job seekers. Meeting the needs of both of these consumers continues to challenge many workforce development programs. For more than two decades large and small employers have remained consistent in their expectations. Specifically, businesses want publicly funded providers of education and training services to

- understand and respect their needs;
- provide skilled workers and support in hiring and retaining qualified job seekers; and
- coordinate efforts with and through employer led industry sector organizations and general business organizations.

This sounds simple but it is not. A plethora of disconnects exist in the way employers are engaged. One possible solution is emerging—intermediaries. In the simplest of terms, a workforce intermediary is an organization which seeks to assist the two key customers of the workforce system — job seekers and employers — through coordination and collaboration among and between agencies and providers that impact service delivery.

To better address employers’ needs, supply side providers of workforce development services will need to restructure their policies, practices, and resource allocation strategies. To assist states, localities, and individual programs in this effort, NCWD/Youth has developed the *Guideposts for Supporting Employers*. These *Guideposts* complement the *Guideposts for Success* that focus on what youth need to succeed in the workplace. The following framework details what the workforce development system can do to address employers’ needs with regard to hiring any job applicant, as well as additional needs employers may have in hiring and retaining employees with disabilities.

The *Guideposts for Supporting Employers* are organized with the explicit purpose of helping workforce development policy makers and program providers reduce identified barriers. There are two categories within the framework. The first focuses on what system designers (state and local) need to do. The second looks at what individual programs which include a wide array of education and training institutions such as community rehabilitation centers, secondary and post secondary institutions, apprenticeship programs, and One-Stop Career Centers need to do.

Employer Needs	Workforce Systems Obligations
Awareness of their particular industry’s needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop profile of local employers by size, type, and location</li> <li>• Identify and track labor market trends, including projecting skill needs</li> <li>• Develop clearinghouse of skill requirements (standards) used by key industries</li> </ul>
Quality skills development programs and documentation of competencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the development of rigorous academic and technical skills training programs</li> <li>• Promote training programs that include the acquisition of work-readiness (soft skills)</li> <li>• Provide documentation/credentials to employers of education or industry recognized attainment for all referrals</li> <li>• Develop work-based learning tools (assessment of skills development, checklists for use by workplace supervisors, etc.)</li> </ul>
Convenient access to programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Streamline referrals between employers and programs</li> <li>• Promote the use of One-Stop Career Centers</li> </ul>
Coordinated customer support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare and maintain directory of employer liaisons in all education and training programs in region</li> <li>• Convene the employer liaisons on regular basis</li> <li>• Develop broad-based, business-advised marketing strategies for advocating employer needs and views</li> <li>• Present program information from all providers based on a business perspective</li> <li>• Promote the participation of workforce development professionals in activities that educate them about business and industry (externships, job shadows, etc.)</li> </ul>

Employer Needs	Workforce Systems Obligations
Access to disability specific information and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote universal design of education and training programs</li> <li>• Identify needed accommodations and workplace resources</li> <li>• Develop and provide cross disability awareness training for employees and managers</li> <li>• Identify gaps in products and services and establish common strategies among the providers and employers to fill such gaps</li> </ul>
Awareness of recruitment resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect existing business and employer networks with job referral and placement organizations</li> <li>• Market services through existing community forums (newsletters, job fairs, etc.)</li> <li>• Join business organizations</li> <li>• Build and maintain networks of business and employer contacts through continuous dialogue</li> <li>• Make direct contact with new employers</li> </ul>
Convenient access to applicants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimize red tape</li> <li>• Coordinate employer outreach with other professionals</li> <li>• Respond to employer outreach efforts</li> <li>• Provide supports to employers (training, work-based mentorship strategies and other tools) to support job shadowing and short-term internships</li> </ul>
Effective applicant screening based on technical, academic, and work readiness skills and employers' needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify competencies needed for each job and industry</li> <li>• Visit companies to identify needs</li> <li>• Understand and adhere to company screening processes as closely as possible</li> <li>• Know each applicant skills, interests, and aptitudes</li> <li>• Match applicant to employer's position, needs and circumstances</li> <li>• Ensure applicants are enrolled in updated and rigorous skills training programs</li> <li>• Identify and address barriers to accessing training programs</li> <li>• Prepare and support applicant in soft skills (appropriate work behavior, language, dress, etc.)</li> <li>• Ensure applicants have documentation of academic, technical, and work readiness skills</li> </ul>
Disability specific supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and address job accommodations when needed</li> <li>• Identify and address accessibility issues at workplaces</li> <li>• Provide on-going post-placement follow up with the employer and applicant</li> <li>• Prepare and support applicant in understanding and managing job-related disability issues (disclosure, reasonable accommodation needs, etc.)</li> <li>• Conduct periodic disability and diversity awareness training for supervisors and co-workers</li> </ul>
Return on investment of time and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect employers' time</li> <li>• Keep meetings short and informative</li> <li>• Ensure that both support services and applicants' presence are benefits, not detriments, to employer operations</li> </ul>

The National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth) is composed of partners with expertise in disability, education, employment, and workforce development issues. NCWD/Youth is housed at the Institute for Educational Leadership in Washington, DC. This document was developed by NCWD/Youth funded by a grant/contract/ cooperative agreement from the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (Number #E-9-4-1-0070). The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Department of Labor. Nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply the endorsement by the U.S. Department of Labor. Individuals may reproduce any part of this document. Please credit the source in support of federal funds. To obtain this publication in an alternate format please contact the Collaborative.

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