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WIB Benchmarking Survey Completed November 2008

Background

This survey is a follow up to an original survey, which established a benchmark for the California Workforce Association WIRED Collaboratory project. In the original survey, we asked the 50 California Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), whether or not they were in the California Innovation Corridor (CIC), to complete the survey. We had an 82 percent response rate, or a total of 41 WIBs. In this survey, we asked the (now) 49 WIBs to complete the survey, and had 40 completions, which is the same completion rate. Some of the questions were included in the Social Network survey, rather than this one, in which we had a 100 percent response rate.

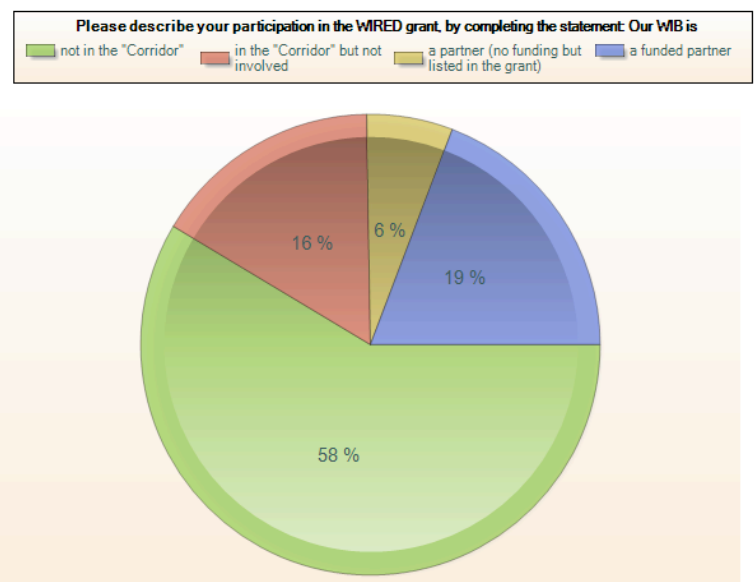
In each of 49 local workforce areas, there is a WIB, a private sector led Board that develops policy, provides program oversight, and provides leadership over workforce issues and programs in their labor markets. Each WIB has an Executive Director, housed in an administrative agency, who directs staff and provides support to the Board. This survey was sent to the Executive Directors of each WIB, and when referring to WIBs in this report, we are using the Executive Directors' responses to the survey. In some cases, the Executive Director is different than the one who originally completed the survey, as we have had turnover in the last two years. There is also not a direct correspondence between the WIBs who completed the original and final surveys.

We supplemented the final survey with follow up conversations with a set of WIB directors to better understand some of the results, and these comments are included throughout the report.

Description of Original and Final Survey Results

When asked to describe their participation in the WIRED grant, WIBs answering the survey fell into four categories: not in the Corridor, in the Corridor but not involved, a partner (no funding but listed in the grant), and a funded partner. The chart to the right displays the respondents' relationship to the WIRED grant.

In our original survey, 53% of the respondents were not in the "Corridor", 21% were in the "Corridor" but not involved, 8% were partners (no funding but listed in the grant), and 18% were funded partners. These are very similar characteristics to our final survey.

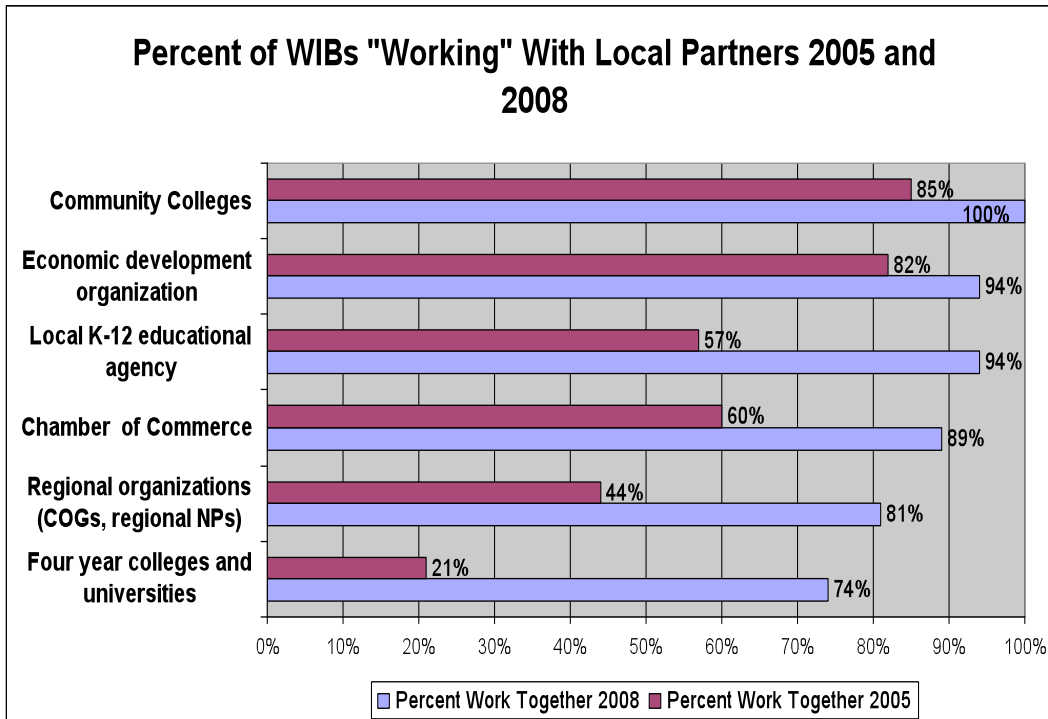


We described one of the grant’s key goals as follows: **Accelerate development of a highly skilled 21st Century talent pool by creating pilot projects and activities capable of supporting a continuum of math, science and engineering education (K–U), and lifelong learning relevant to the 21st Century worker.** We asked respondents to agree or disagree with the following statements in relation to this goal. The first percentage in each cell is the original survey result, and the second is the result from the final survey.

	Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly agree
No one in our labor market is working on this	27/20%	11/23%	16/7%	16/20%	14/13%	11/3%	0/7%	5/7%
There are some organizations working on this but it is not systematic	6/3%	14/6%	3/16%	14/19%	28/16%	11/16%	0/16%	5/6%
There are a set of players working on this in an organized way	11/10%	14/17%	16/24%	14/21%	22/3%	19/7%	11/14%	6/3%
This goal is possible within three years	8/3%	8/17%	16/14%	11/28%	13/24%	24/7%	8/3%	13/3%
Our WIB would be interested in working on this	3/7%	0/7%	0/0%	0/13%	3/13%	18/10%	34/23%	32/27%

As displayed in the chart, respondents stated that in virtually every area of the State, communities are working on these issues. It appears that in response to the statement “There are some organizations working on this but it is not systematic,” there is a bell curve set of answers, suggesting that there is some systematic work, but it varies. In the original survey, it was the opinion of most WIB Directors that for the most part, there is not an organized approach to addressing these issues in local communities but that goal was possible within three years. In the final survey, there was less agreement that this could be possible within three years, and in our conversations, many WIB directors said that the work was harder and more challenging than originally conceived. The WIA funding in California decreased during the WIRED project, and funding was also taken back from California in a

rescission of federal dollars. This led to concern that there is not sufficient money to launch new projects in this area. Further, more information is now available about the basic skills crisis in California, which many WIBs attribute to their concerns about addressing STEM issues, as they believe that it is their job to first remediate skills shortages before launching projects for higher level math and science skill attainment. This also is a factor in the decrease in number of WIBs who say they are interested in working on this issue.

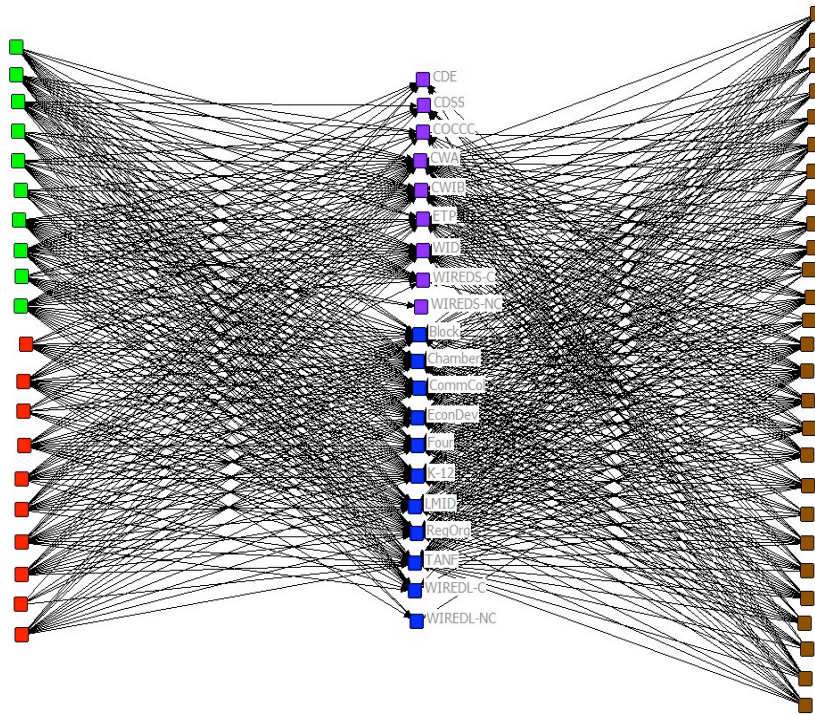


At the beginning of the WIRED grant, we believed that if communities can indeed respond to the WIRED goals, that it will only be through strong relationships of all organizations involved in workforce development, economic development, and education. Interested in understanding and benchmarking relationships among WIBs and other systems, we asked respondents to assess the strength of their current partnerships with other agencies by picking which most closely describes their relationships. We still believe that this is the case, and in our Social Networking Survey, we asked the WIBs to describe their relationships with the same agencies we asked about in the original survey. The chart above shows the perceived current relationships with community agencies at the current time, compared with our prior results.

Although the relative relationships with each set of institutions have not changed since the first survey, the level of relationships has substantially increased. As displayed in the chart above, WIBs have the most active and deepest relationships with economic development agencies and community colleges. There are many examples of strong working partnerships between WIBs and these two systems. Systems that need the most relationship building are institutions of higher education, and regional organizations.

Wired
funded
= 15

Wired
non
funded
= 12

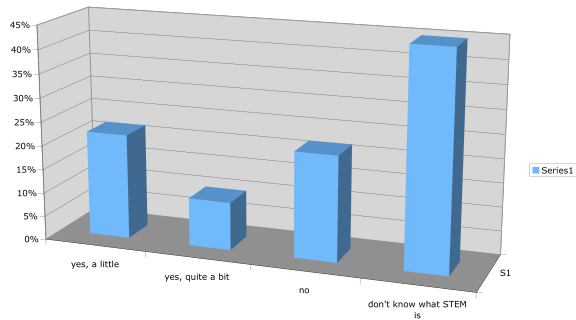


Non
Wired
= 11

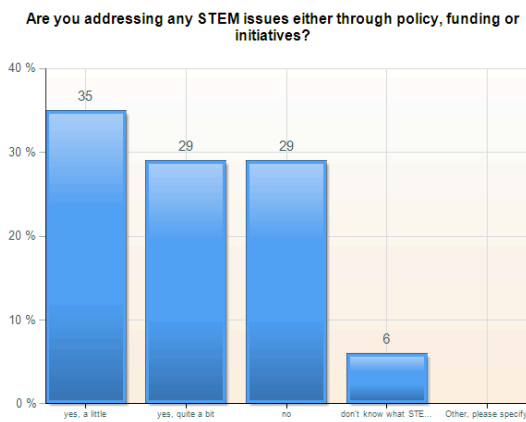
Our Social Networking study also shows, in the chart above, that the WIBs associated with WIRED, either as a funded or non-funded partner, have, on average, more ties and relationships with more community and state agencies than the non-WIRED.

We asked the WIB Directors about whether their WIB members talk about technical workers, and the current and future needs of employers. In our original survey, ten percent said that they rarely talked about the need for technical workers; 52 percent said that they often talked about this need, and 38 percent said that they talked about this issue all the time. In the final survey, six percent said that they rarely talked about the need for technical workers; 52 percent said that they often talked about this need, and 42 percent said that they talked about this issue all the time, several WIBs answered that in particular, they talk about this in relationship to the clean/green tech industry. In response to the statement “Our WIB has actually funded projects or training that address the current and/or future needs of employers for more technical workers.” 77% answered yes and 23% answered no. In the final survey, the number of training projects actually went down, as 70% answered yes and 30% answered no. Comments explained that overall investment in training has gone down because of budget cuts.

We asked WIBs: Are you addressing any STEM issues either through policy, funding or initiatives? In our original survey, 45 percent of the respondents did not know the term STEM. Although many clarified later that they were addressing these issues, the term STEM was a new term to almost half the WIB directors. In the final survey, there were still 6 percent who did not know the term STEM, but 64% answered yes to the question – Are you addressing STEM issues through policy, funding or initiatives, compared to 26% in the original.



Original Survey



Final Survey

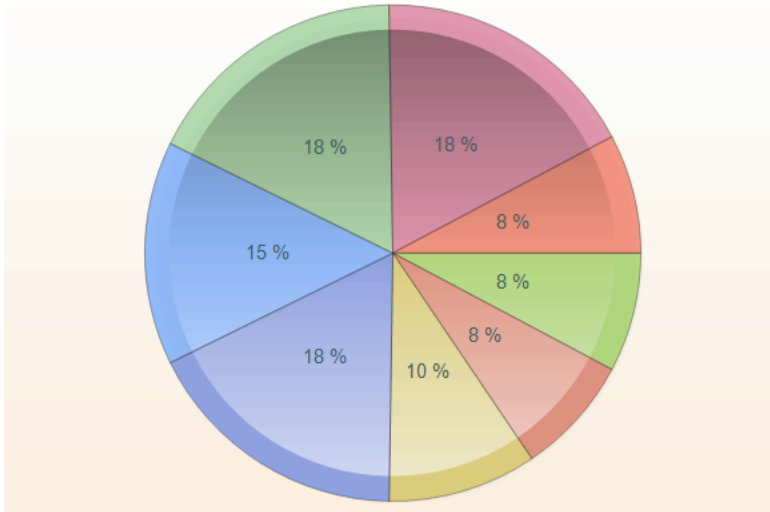
Throughout the country, there is a scale of WIBs that on one end, are led by the Private Sector, and who are therefore truly “demand-driven,” and those that are run by government agencies. We asked respondents to indicate the extent to which their work is initiated and controlled by the WIB vs. the organization in which they are housed (county government, welfare department, city structure etc.). The common assumption is that WIBs who are led more by the business community will be more responsive to their needs, and the needs of the community.

Conversations with WIBs tell a slightly different story than our original assumptions. Although in theory, demand driven programs are initiated and overseen by the private sector, in fact, many WIBs are running demand-driven programs, but still are largely under the auspices of government agencies rather than WIBs. Variables such as receipt of special grants and augmented funding, participation in the new “Learning Lab” initiative, in which WIBs are redesigning their One-Stops to focus on talent development rather than job placement, and the alignment of programs with economic development are several of the factors that have moved WIBs towards demand driven approaches, even if they are focused more on WIA oversight than they are on community leadership.

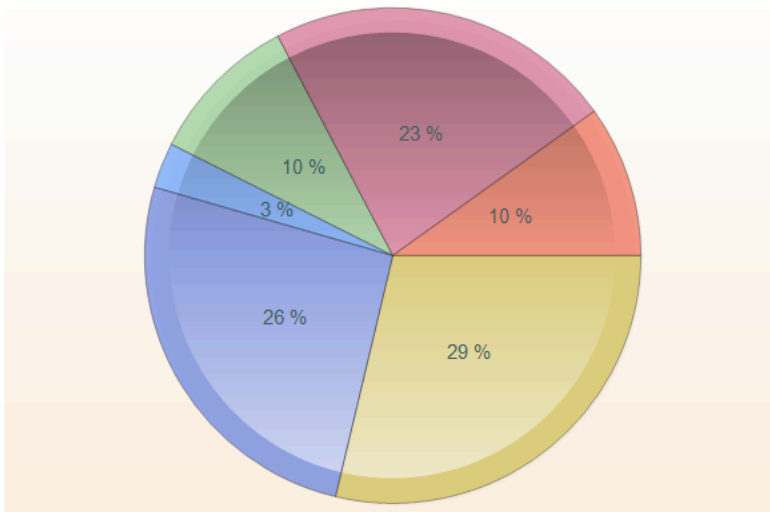
When asked, “on a scale that has WIA oversight on one end and community leadership on the other, our WIB is focused on, “ WIBs answered:

First Survey

On a scale that has WIA oversight on one end and community leadership on the other, our WIB is focused on:



On a scale that has WIA oversight on one end and community leadership on the other, our WIB is focused on:



Final survey

Please assess the progress of your organization in making the shift to a demand-driven approach.

Percentage on the left is the original survey and the percentage on the right is the final survey responses	Just starting				Strongly agree
We have named the employer as primary customer	5%/10%	10%/3%	26%/23%	26%/39%	33%/26%
We fund business services	10%/13%	10%/13%	10%/13%	18%/23%	52%/39%
All of our services are demand-driven	10%/6%	15%/13%	18%/16%	42%/45%	15%/19%
We provide guidance to the One-Stop to focus on employers	10%/10%	10%/10%	12%/23%	30%/39%	38%/19%
We fund customized training for employers	26%/32%	15%/6%	15%/16%	21%/19%	23%/26%
We have a set of performance measures for business services	42%/27%	8%/27%	18%/23%	15%/10%	18%/13%

The answers to the questions in this chart tell a compelling story about the shift to a demand driven system. In our conversations with WIB directors about the changes in responses from the first to the final survey, several key themes emerged. The first is that because the performance measures in WIA focus only on the job seeker, most WIBs regretfully make choices to reduce the emphasis on business services when funding decreases. They believe that the incentives and sanctions in the federal law drive them away from services to the business community when funding is tight, because they have to “make their numbers” as required by the law. That being said, you can still see a positive trend in the chart above. More WIBs state that their services are demand driven, and are funding customized training for employers, although fewer are actually finding business services.

What is not reflected in the final survey, since it was not included in the original, is the Learning Lab initiative, in which 12 WIBs are piloting a complete redesign of the One-Stop delivery system. This initiative very deliberately moves One-Stops away from a self-service job placement approach to an approach that requires staff to provide an initial assessment to understand the skills and needs of each individual, provide the appropriate job skills training and/or educational remediation, and then help them find the job that uses those skills. This skill or talent development strategy moves the workforce system into a new paradigm, in which skills and talent, rather than an immediate job placement, is the underlying framework for service delivery. This fundamentally changes the way the public workforce system operates and is



perceived. By registering every person who walks through the door, rather than enroll only those few who go to training, the Learning Labs are creating applicant pools that are substantially more useful to employers. In some areas, the Learning Lab One-Stops have gone from enrolling 500 people a year, to enrolling more than 3,000 people in one month. For employers, this means that when they call a One-Stop looking for talented and skilled workers, their pool of potential candidates is much more likely to meet their needs.

Our WIB is in the following phase in regard to these activities:

Percentage on the left is the original survey and the percentage on the right is the final survey responses	Not on WIB's agenda	Haven't done this	In planning stages	Just starting	Do this regularly
WIB sponsored employer events	2%/0%	12%/3%	8%/10%	28%/23%	50%/65%
Local workforce summits around particular issues	2%/6%	20%/13%	15%/19%	25%/32%	38%/29%
Creation of new community task forces to look at local workforce issues	13%/0%	18%/23%	15%/13%	23%/26%	31%/39%
Sponsorship of community focus groups	18%/7%	15%/31%	13%/3%	23%/28%	31%/31%
Release of labor market studies and other state of the workforce reports	3%/0%	15%/23%	18%/7%	10%17%	54%/53%
Relevant media and marketing events that highlight workforce issues activities and events	5%/0%	15%/19%	22%/23%	22%/32%	35%/26%
Building new community partnerships	0%/3%	2%/3%	15%16%	28%/16%	55%/61%
New resource sharing	8%/0%	5%10%	32%/27%	26%/23%	29%/40%
New policies adopted by outside organizations as a result of WIBs actions	10%/3%	40%/34%	25%/21%	15%/10%	10%/31%
Better alignment or mobilization of community resources	5%/0%	18%/13%	32%/35%	18%/19%	28%/32%
Joint planning and marketing	5%/3%	13%/16%	41%/32%	15%/16%	26%/32%

In the chart above, there are several key changes between the original and final surveys. First, the numbers of WIBs who say that the activities listed are “not on the WIB agenda” have decreased substantially, with many of the activities now on everyone’s agenda. And on the other end of the scale, the number of WIBs who “do this regularly” has substantially increased. In conversations with WIBs, they state the WIRED initiative has validated the kinds of community leadership and collaboration that they knew needed to be done, but needed some outside influence and support. They cited CWA Board meetings and conferences as catalysts to develop new relationships, try new approaches, and branch out further from WIA oversight.

In the last part of the survey, we asked several open ended questions designed to solicit information that might help CWA remove barriers or focus capacity building in particular areas. The original survey pointed to some of the same barriers that the final does, although CWA was able to design the collaboratory around some of the technical assistance and capacity building requests in the first. The following three questions list answers from the final survey.

The WIRED grant states that transformation of the system would result in: Responsive, flexible education/workforce systems, which anticipate and respond to global market changes, workforce needs with continuity across systems.

We asked respondents what they need to help contribute to this vision. They answered as follows:

- 1 More flexible funding
State policies to support this work not poverty programs
- 2 Planning grant to facilitate a broader community understanding of workforce.
- 3 Other than more money and State leadership to align system partners...the most flexibility to meet the needs of our local economy as possible.
- 4 Resources
State level policy changes
New measurements for success
More flexibility
- 5 Funding
- 6 More funding around planning and development of staff training, continued strong support from DOL in WIRED type initiatives, industry cluster work.
- 7 More resources and options to train incumbent adult workers in a place, timing, and manner that is tailored to working adults, rather than youth
- 8 More flexibility in the educational systems to adjust to new demands.
- 9 Money
- 10 *Stronger partnerships with education and training providers to align vision
*Stronger understanding of the needs of business in the region in terms of talent development
*Greater ability to align the actions of training and education with the needs of business
*Broader collaboration with local government, economic development, education and businesses toward this goal.
- 11 We do not have the funding to focus on anything but the client.

- 12 Place WIB's, via statute, into economic development environment. Get them out of welfare departments. At national level get Labor and Commerce more closely aligned.
- 13 Technical assistance and best practices on how others are doing this.
- 14 New workforce legislation that supports the vision
- 15 We are in the planning stages on 3 initiatives and will be looking for funding to help us implement.
- 16 Less regulation from the DOL and the State EDD! The regulations attending Core funds and any State grant proposal are far too burdensome. We spend all of our time responding to frivolous rules and inquiries, rather than using our time to get something important accomplished.
- 17 Sharing of best practices and successful system models.
- 18 Funding to help support initiatives that address current and future employer and regional workforce needs.
- 19 We need funds to do this as our regular formula funds are tied up
- 20 The current economic climate is uneasy about how best to react to global market change and it is very difficult in an area of extreme unemployment how to be responsive to all, however it is our duty to use the "systems" to better serve our community.
- 21 A better local economy and resources to promote the concept.
- 22 More dedicated resources for collaboration–building (with resulting ability of handle more sector–focused initiatives) Can only handle two now – would like to expand for several more.

We asked: What are the main barriers to achieving this vision for your organization? We know you need more money, but what beyond that? We are particularly interested in barriers that we might be able to address. Be as specific as possible!

- 1 Changes in performance measures, changes in community colleges to do more open entry open exit
- 2 Two issues. 1. Marketing of the workforce system so the community knows who we are & what we do. 2. [Our county] has abandoned "economic development" because it believes (incorrectly) that economic development must be "land intensive"--and because there is little land available here, that we must remain a low–paying, tourist town.
- 3 Reduce the duplication of eligibility paperwork and reporting between TAA and WIA. Continuity or bridges for confidentiality rules of sharing information, alignment of Community College governance structure to allow for "demand driven" training not the 18 months to a an approved curricula that gets paid for on the credit side of CC's and not a fee for services.
- 4 Ability to forge more adaptive and flexible alliances with public adult education systems
- 5 We need to reduce the administrative requirements of the program (monitoring, EEO, and updates of annual plan "busywork").
- 6 Bringing EDC's closer to the vision, education as a partner is working well, but defining the goals of each party, better alignment with Gov's 15% funds around industry cluster work throughout the state as a model
- 7 An ROI model for incumbent worker training that is accepted by private business. This model would account for paid time for training while employed, the savings due to increased retention, savings in recruiting costs, etc.

- Different from above, an ROI model for customized training delivered to laid off workers that is accepted by private business. This is an attempt to create a tool which could be used to approach employers and demonstrate that it is financially in their best interests to fund all or a portion of customized training to meet some of their hiring needs.
- 8 A better conversation between the educational community and the employer community.
- 9 Changes in law to allow flexible, responsive activities across systems. Changes in law to release programs from the shackles of oversight, releasing human resources to get creative rather than mired in the minutia of outdated bureaucracy.
- 10 *Political will
 *Access to businesses, particularly small businesses
 *Collaboration and alignment with community colleges and training programs
 *Better recognition by region that WIB is the go-to agency on workforce development
 *Regional vision for business development, talent development and community improvement.
- 11 EDD to be flexible and local-control supportive, in reality...DW additional assistance for instance is a cumbersome, time-consuming process that does not allow us to respond quickly to industry needs
- 12 To provide more business services, we would need training for our staff.
- 13 Weight of County/health and human service environment, which is a very risk/leadership adverse culture.
- 14 Legislation and policy changes in the applicable organizations including education. More involvement of economic development agencies with education and workforce systems, strong leadership in these systems.
- 15 These types of initiatives require complete cooperation/coordination with all levels of the education system. Education already has their own priorities established based on improvement on standardized tests. It is difficult to get them to divert their focus to workforce - related initiatives that are also important.
- 16 See no. 10.
- 17 Organizations and programs that provide assistance to area residents are struggling to survive the continued reductions in funding.
- 18 Besides money, we could use better industry contacts to get additional involvement of employers in workforce issues and needs.
- 19 Having the time & staff to organize around this issue
- 20 As in the above response, it is about the task of effectively serving the large numbers now coming in the door. Job creation and pathways are critical. There are not enough of the jobs (especially in this service area) as defined in the vision at this point.
- 21 Same as above.
- 22 Need more employers to recognize looming workforce crisis and need for them to actively get involved in solutions. Initiatives are embraced by but a few of the early-converts, but it takes an extraordinary amount of effort/time to bring on board the majority of the affected employers. An overall consciousness-raising (i.e. informational campaign) needs to be undertaken with this country's employers. This would help facilitate the local work then undertaken by the WIBs.

We asked survey respondents to add anything else that would be helpful for us to know as we continue this work.

- 1 Would welcome ideas and brainstorming about how could we develop policy and strategies for moving workers out of dying industries before they die. For example, what would it take to build new skills for thousands of automotive workers, while they are still working, so that they more easily transition to new employment before being laid off and while they have the support of wages and being employed? This could be a cornerstone of a workforce system that is truly responsive to global changes.
- 2 The WIBs can be leaders in this effort, but it can't happen without Education as a full cooperating partner.
- 3 We don't hear much from the State about this, so we are not sure where we fit in.
- 4 FLEXIBLE SYSTEMS!!
- 5 Need to keep our eyes on the long-term picture, and not let the current economic upheaval either: a) diminish attention on the employer as customer; and/or b) lull the "system" to think that, in an "employers' market", the looming workforce skills-shortage is no more.

