



Re-imagining Workforce Development Services in Alameda County (Virtual) Public Forum

July 29, 2020

Questions and Comments

Alameda County Workforce Development Board (ACWDB) staff initiated a public input process to solicit and generate ideas and feedback from stakeholders that will help to inform ACWDB's planning process for the upcoming 2021-2024 procurement cycle. Outlined below are the questions and comments from the webinar participants and staff responses.

Questions (from chat box):

1. How will Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) work during COVID-19?

- ACWDB staff has actually been working “during COVID” since March - and it appears that we've had some success processing paperwork virtually. We would imagine that we'll do more online or distance learning/training unless training providers are able to house trainees safely (including distancing) within their facilities. Much of how we do business will depend on state and local guidance regarding re-opening. Additionally, we would imagine that we're doing much more electronic signatures and/or scanning of signed documents - and would expect that to continue until things are back to normal.

2. Do you have any additional funds coming for COVID-19 response?

- Yes, we are currently working with COVID-19 additional funds. Our newest initiative is called COVID-19 Emergency Response Supportive Services (CERSS). CERSS provides up to \$800 in supportive services for individuals that were displaced or working less hours due to the pandemic. CERSS can be used to pay for things like utility bills, transportation, housing supports, and technology to facilitate working from home. It is available to qualifying individuals and families now through any of our career service providers. [CERSS](#) is a time sensitive resource so please inquire without delay.
- Additionally, resources are being negotiated through the federal legislative process now. We anticipate that those resources will include workforce development funds. The specific use and amount of funds is as of yet undetermined but we stand in support with California Legislators, California Workforce Association, and the National Association Workforce Development Boards in our call for additional federal resources.

3. I've noticed some of our [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act] (WIOA) training providers are struggling to stay open or adjust to the COVID-19 situation, some programs even closing. Does the board anticipate any programs to support the training providers in terms of funding or other forms of support? Perhaps this already exists?

- The board supports training initiatives that can be utilized by employers to address surge job creation. The On-the-Job Training (OJT) program benefits both job seekers and employers in that employers can train new hires directly as needed to successfully fulfill the duties of the position.
- The Customized Training program is another viable option for individuals that need training in a surge job capacity or for high-demand positions. Employers participating in this program can train individuals in-house by an accredited trainer on staff. Additionally, the board contracts with the Corporation for Manufacturing Excellence (Manex) to advise small to mid-sized manufacturers on operational improvements that can increase their bottom line, and lead to trainings by Manex in the areas of lean manufacturing or adjusting to new COVID-19 re-opening protocols.
- ACWDB also continues to support online learning such as Metrix, Coursera, etc. and university extended education certificate programs. The state is updating it's Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) guidelines for addressing virtual training, and the loss of ETPL approved providers.

4. Were workers with disabilities mentioned?

- Over the past year, ACWDB's Career Services Providers served eight (8) Disability Employment Accelerator (DEA) grant participants on the behalf of ACWDB, by working in partnership with East Bay Innovations (EBI). The DEA was a state workforce board accelerator grant, led by the Contra Costa Workforce Development Board, that was geared toward preparing people with disabilities for employment in high-growth industries
- Another key deliverable of the DEA grant, was to support employer engagement efforts. ACWDB staff held an employer-focused event to educate employers and other stakeholders about the unique talents that people with disabilities bring to the workplace, as well as the kinds of on-the-job support available through EBI, that bolsters employment and retention success.
- Staff also mentioned that in this program year (July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2020), Career Services Providers and Youth Service Providers are required to build closer traction with disability programs and stakeholders, in order to strive toward achieving Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) opportunities. This close traction between disability stakeholders and the workforce system has also been referenced in California's CIE Blueprint. ACWDB is committed to playing a role in helping job seekers with disabilities achieve CIE.
- It should also be mentioned that 51% of our WIOA Adult enrollments must be individuals who possess barriers to employment - specifically those barriers that have been called out at the state and local levels (priority populations). Priority Population categories include: veterans, spouses of veterans, low-income individuals (cash aid recipients, food stamp recipients, homeless, low-wage workers, etc.), individuals who test with basic skills deficiencies (including English language learners), individuals with disabilities, and returning citizens (re-entry).

5. **Can the CERSS grant financial award level be increased to provide more of an assistance to the community?**
 - Unfortunately, CERSS support thresholds are set by the state. But if we successfully spend our CERSS allocation we would be in a good position to receive additional funds if the state makes them available.
 - Staff has also suggested that multiple individuals from one household be allowed to apply for these benefits - thereby increasing the allocation per household.

6. **Will there be a trainer so that case managers are able to help clients to work effectively remotely?**
 - The State of California has offered a few different forums for sharing best-practices for effective remote case-management. Staff have been sharing those opportunities with staff from our contracted service providers - and will continue to offer those opportunities as they arise. Additionally, Career Services Provider staff are welcome to engage their program liaison and/or technicians for support in these areas.

7. **Also, disproportionate job loss has happened among people who are not citizens. Is there anything the workforce system can do to help? Such as training for entrepreneurship (Immigrants Rising and #Undocu hustle is an example) or support for day labor organizations?**
 - Our workforce system is funded through federal legislation and does require that participants possess documentation adequate to verify they are authorized to accept employment in the United States. Once determined eligible for WIOA services, a Career Coach can advise participants regarding training and/or opportunities with organizations that support entrepreneurship.
 - However, WIOA workshops are generally open to interested job seekers. WIOA Workshops are dynamic and offer great advice and tips for creating an up-to-date resume, leveraging LinkedIn to discover employment opportunities, interviewing skills and more. Workshops are now virtual can be found at respective Career Center websites:
 - [Tri Valley Career Center](#)
 - [Tri Cities Career Center](#)
 - [Eden Area AJCC](#)
 - [North Cities Career Center](#) - College of Alameda

Comments (from chat box):

- There is a general challenge around closing the digital divide....dislocated workers need laptops.
- Yes, workers need laptops, but also they need cheap access to the internet.
- We need to expand our outreach for employment opportunities to corporations that are headquartered outside of California. With the use of technology new markets are opening up outside California that our employees need to contemplate.

- I'm worried that many of the jobs we connect our re-entry population to are frontline jobs, which put them at risk for COVID exposure.
- Also, job growth is happening with a lot of bad employers and jobs (e.g. Amazon warehouse work).
- The initial influential factor that may have an impact on preparing our clients for upward mobility is making sure that they have the appropriate skills to have quality jobs.
- In light of the nation's discussion about race and equity we need to have unified and compelling discussions with the tech industry which is least impacted about equipping the underserved with entry level tech skills.
- A series of workshops/training that will support professional growth
- @Jason....we need corporations to make major commitments to re-training the workers in the industries most impacted by COVID. The resurgence of new tech has helped all of us remain connected during the pandemic but many of us are not aware of the ways artificial intelligence is impacting our service industries.
- I think we need jobs that single parents can do while working from home and while their kids are doing distance learning. Especially jobs for single parents who have a high school diploma or some college.
- Regarding the re-entry population, and the essential jobs they generally obtain, the hope is all future employers will test applicants for COVID-19 before offering employment, then proceed accordingly.
- Completely agree with Sarah. We need apprenticeship programs to train workers and give them tangible experience to add to their resumes so that they can get better jobs. At IRC we work with many immigrants who have foreign work experience that often gets disregarded by employers who want US-based or more recent work experience. Apprenticeships would allow these job-seekers to re-enter their fields and show recent experience on their resumes for their skills
- There is a gap between the COVID-19 work from home, access to technology for people with barriers as well as computer literacy.
- For example, Hewlett Packard and Microsoft [should] donate computers so that every household has multiple computers. Parents need a computer at the same time to work while their children are doing online school. The computer is the way people are connecting with each other, networking, becoming trained and working.
- Adding to Estelle's comment about outreach being more customer focused, the intake process, too, uses language and processes that are not familiar to the target customer and can be very challenging for them.
- Older workers who face ageism
- Utilizing a peer model for program training, case management, outreach, etc.

- Not everyone works well with computers. Having a safe cohort training session with good safety protocols would be nice.
- To accommodate the influx of job seekers, move away from micro models (case management) and toward mezzo and macro models.
- Working in conjunction with employers to test new and current employers for COVID, the fear of working safely must be addressed.
- Work and education rely on an underlying well-being. Mental health, childcare, closing divide or transportation (post COVID) divide, and housing are key wrap-arounds that are needed for the success of each individual. Also, intentional outreach is key...many don't know that these services are available. [Request for Proposals] RFPs need to require detailed outreach strategies and require targeting specific underserved areas and demographics.
- More partnerships with worker centers who have direct relationships with low-wage immigrant workers. E.g. Street Level Health Project, Day Labor Centers, Monument Impact, etc. :)
- Developing Career Communities versus individualized services
- Maximizing opportunities for skills upgrade training to increase technical skills for families facing layoff and challenges re-entering the workforce while Sheltering In Place. Stackable certifications will go a long way.