

Idaho Combined State Plan, WIOA 2016

Executive Summary

The federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act was signed into law on July 22, 2014. Also known as “WIOA,” this act replaces the previous Workforce Investment Act of 1998, and authorizes four of Idaho’s core workforce development programs, as well as the state’s One-Stop system and Workforce Development Council. The core programs authorized by the act are:

- **The Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker programs** authorized under Title I-B of WIOA and administered by the Idaho Department of Labor,
- **The Adult Education program** authorized under Title II of WIOA and administered by the Division of Professional-Technical Education,
- **The Wagner-Peyser/Employment Services program** authorized under Title III of WIOA and administered by the Idaho Department of Labor, and
- **Vocational Rehabilitation programs** authorized under Title IV of WIOA and administered by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Idaho Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

The law requires that each state submit a plan in order to receive federal funding under WIOA. Idaho will be submitting a Combined State Plan, which covers the four core programs listed above, as well as three additional partner programs listed below:

- **Jobs for Veterans State Grant Program**, authorized under 38, U.S.C 4100, and administered by the Idaho Department of Labor,
- **Senior Community Service Employment Program** authorized under Title V of the Older American’s Act of 1965 and administered by the Idaho Commission on Aging, and
- **Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers Program**, authorized under chapter 2 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974 and administered by the Idaho Department of Labor.

Idaho’s Combined State Plan includes an economic analysis, an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of Idaho’s current workforce development activities, the vision and goals for Idaho’s workforce development system under WIOA, strategies for implementing Idaho’s vision and goals, and operational planning elements for implementing those strategies. This executive summary will focus on the major findings, vision and goals, primary strategies, and important next steps identified in Idaho’s plan.

Major Findings

The Idaho Plan includes an economic and workforce analysis, as well as an analysis of Idaho’s workforce development activities. The findings from these two analyses inform the vision, goals, and strategies included in subsequent sections of the Plan. They are summarized below.

Economic and Workforce Analysis

Idaho’s workforce development system seeks to prioritize its efforts around those industries and occupations that balance good wages with existing or projected demand for workers, as well as those industries which can have a larger overall effect on Idaho’s economy. However, the Economic and Workforce Analysis in the Plan show that a combined 20% of Idaho’s jobs in 2014 were in the industries of food service and retail. Many of these jobs pay relatively low wages, require relatively little training or education, and lack a significant multiplier effect on Idaho’s economy.

In other words, many of Idaho's workers are in jobs which may not sufficiently prepare them to move into the types of careers that pay better wages and impact Idaho's overall economy. As such, these workers will need to access training and education outside of their current workplace if they want to advance their skills or careers. An enhanced focus on career pathways and stackable credentials, aligned with Idaho's Target Sectors, may help meet this need.

The analysis also showed that youth in the workforce (ages 16-24) have a much higher unemployment rate than other age-groups in Idaho. As teens and young adults are finding it harder to get jobs in the current labor market, fewer are learning the basics of how to hold on to a job or getting the opportunity to learn about various occupations and industries by working or interning in them.

Coupled with education data and direct input from industry, the economic and workforce analysis lends strong support to the state's goals to increase educational attainment beyond high-school. It is vital that Idaho's labor force seek educational and training opportunities to qualify for the jobs that will be available in the next 10 to 20 years.

Workforce Development Activities Analysis

As part of the state planning process, participating core and partner programs were asked to identify strengths and weaknesses of their program activities. Several themes emerged from that discussion. These themes, which are common across all (or most) programs include:

- **Partnerships and Program Alignment** - The primary strength identified in our activities analysis was that of program administration, alignment, and partnership.
- **Serving Rural Communities** – Nearly every program identified service to rural areas as a significant challenge.
- **Attracting, Training, and Retaining Quality Staff** – Many programs identified staffing issues as a barrier. This was primarily true for those programs which provide direct services such as counseling and instruction.
- **Connecting with Employers and Industry** – Several core and partner programs noted that they have a difficult time connecting in a meaningful way to employers at both the state and local level.

The findings above inform Idaho's strategies for carrying out the vision and goals of the State Plan.

Vision and Goals

The vision identified in the Plan states that: Idaho's workforce development system will improve access to education, economic opportunity, and employment for all of Idaho's job seekers—especially those with significant barriers to employment; develop a skilled and competitive workforce that meets the needs of Idaho's employers; stimulate the vitality of our local communities; and promote a state economy that is competitive in the global economy.

The goals identified in the Plan reiterate the goals set by the Workforce Development Council in their Spring 2015 Strategic Planning Session. These goals are to:

1. Promote policies that align workforce, education, economic development, and entrepreneurship to meet industry and employers' workforce needs.
2. Facilitate development of an Idaho workforce that is highly skilled and committed to continuous learning.
3. Support a comprehensive education and workforce delivery system.

While the goals of the Council provide a broad vision for the state, the economic and activities analysis conducted in Idaho's Plan identified four specific areas that are of special concern for the purposes of improving Idaho's workforce system under WIOA. These four areas inform the state's strategies to carry out the goals listed above and focus the state's priorities:

- Serving Rural Communities,
- Attracting, Training, and Retaining Quality Staff,
- Aligning Career Pathways with Target Sectors, and
- Connecting with Youth in the Workforce.

The goals identified in the Plan support both the workforce and employers by promoting programs that provide relevant, high quality services to participants, and result in a workforce whose skills are aligned to meet the needs of employers and industry. These goals also acknowledge the need for alignment among Idaho's workforce and education systems to promote a seamless system that is accessible and promotes a "no wrong door" approach.

Primary Strategies

Idaho's Plan reiterates the core strategies identified by the Workforce Development Council in 2015, and outlines additional strategies to address the gaps identified in the Plan's analyses. The Plan identifies a number of strategies to help meet the state's vision and goals, however, the focus of this summary is on those core strategies that will have the greatest impact.

- Workforce Development Council Strategies adopted in the Plan:
 - Target Key industries using a sector strategy approach.
 - Enhance opportunities for lifelong learning by expanding delivery options, especially non-traditional options such as work-based learning, compressed scheduling, distance education, and other alternative learning modalities.
 - Support a comprehensive education system for all students K-16+ that includes rigorous school-based learning and relevant work-based learning.
 - Improve the effectiveness of the workforce system through the creation of an accountability system.
- Strategies based on State Plan Analyses:
 - Develop a comprehensive, aligned Career Pathways system, including the use of stackable credentials.
 - Formalize a WIOA Advisory Committee, comprising members from programs represented in the plan, to ensure ongoing program alignment.
 - Request additional state funds from the Idaho Legislature to leverage the full match of federal dollars for relevant workforce programs.
 - Coordinate professional development across workforce programs to address staff retention.
 - Improve efficiencies to reduce staff workload (including integrated intake and data entry options).
 - Use 100% of Title I.b Youth funds to support out-of-school youth.
 - Evaluate and target outreach and recruitment efforts to out-of-school youth.

Important Next Steps

Idaho is in a beneficial position in regards to WIOA implementation in that our workforce programs already cooperate and communicate effectively. While no program or partnership is perfect, these

positive working relationships stand at the core of Idaho's workforce development System. To the extent that these partnerships and collaborative efforts already exist, the bulk of Idaho's future work will revolve around streamlining those partnerships and implementing new activities required in the WIOA statute.

The largest challenge for Idaho's workforce development system will be in implementing, tracking, and reporting the new performance measures set forth in WIOA, under Section 116. All four core programs authorized under WIOA will be required to report on these measures. As a result, the new performance measures will require enhanced data sharing between programs, and all of the programs will be implementing at least some measures which they have never collected before. To meet this challenge, Idaho's programs will need to make serious investments in data alignment and integration.

In Idaho, the WIOA core programs have agreed to examine options for integrating existing data systems, rather than investing in a new single system for all programs. The ideal solution would connect existing data systems and allow them to communicate with each other directly. This plan is intended to streamline participant intake across workforce programs, facilitate data sharing for the purpose of federal reporting, and build on the investments programs have already made in their existing data systems. Until such a solution is implemented, partner programs will continue to participate in ad-hoc data sharing.

Additionally the Plan calls for the instatement of a data integration task force to facilitate this transition. This taskforce will include key program staff, IT staff, and vendors for existing systems. This taskforce will analyze existing data systems, conduct a needs assessment for program data collection, write a scope of work used to solicit available products, and create an implementation plan.