



Workforce Development Boards Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



This Playbook provides steps in which workforce development boards (WDBs) can blur the lines between high school, postsecondary education, and the workforce. WDBs can play a significant role to Raise the Bar for student success by developing an *education-to-workforce system* focusing on Unlocking Career Success.

Step 1

Develop Regional Plans

Step 2

Set Standards and Fund Priorities

Step 3

Champion Employer Voice

Develop Regional Strategic Plans

WDBs play a crucial role in serving employers and the education system by convening and collaborating with local educational institutions, businesses, government officials, and employers to advance growth and high-quality career opportunities to meet the needs of the regional economy. Boards also help link the needs of a community and the talent needs of a region by developing regional workforce plans and sector strategies. When developing regional strategic plans consider how to:



Bring educational partners into the conversation. Our talent pipelines start in school systems so connecting the local education system and the community and technical college system as early as possible to in-demand skills and regional careers is a long-term workforce sustainability strategy.



Incentivize work-based learning opportunities. Access to relevant, real-world learning will encourage youth to pursue high quality, in-demand jobs and is essential to integrate employers more fully within the education and workforce system.



Articulate in-demand skills and occupations. Translate the needs of employers and industry to help students obtain the skills they require to be successful. How employers articulate the skills they need is foundational to informing P-12 educational partners and meeting the workforce needs of the region.

Tools for developing regional strategic plans:

Leverage Perkins and WIOA

Several laws, specifically (1) the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins V), and (2) the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) provide a range of opportunities for business leaders to get involved and embed industry needs and skills across the education and workforce development system.

At the state level, business and industry can provide labor market information (LMI) and guidance to inform career and technical education (CTE) programs and Perkins V and WIOA Unified or Combined state plans (hereinafter, WIOA State Plans), specifically the states' visions and goals, industry sector strategies, and in-demand occupations.

At the local level, business and industry feedback is an important element of local CTE applications; in particular, LMI is necessary to complete the Perkins required Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA). Materials published by AdvanceCTE, the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE), and Business Leaders United provide various resources on how employers can get involved in strengthening career and technical education.



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Tools for developing regional strategic plans (continued):

Elevate the role of youth

In Washington state, the [Pacific Mountain Workforce Development Strategic Plan](#) regularly monitors labor market trends to develop employer partnerships and demand-driven programming for youth and adults. The plan emphasizes the importance of the education-to-workforce pipelines, considering key federal legislation including the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

Many states include youth voice in the workforce planning processes through dedicated feedback sessions, empathy interviews, school shadowing opportunities, and other methods. This ensures that the individuals responsible for creating youth workforce implementation strategies are connected to youth themselves.

Co-develop policies with P-12, higher education, CTE, and business leaders

In Washington state, the Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County developed a [regional blueprint](#) to align shared regional priorities in response to pandemic disruption. The blueprint strategies prioritize the role of youth: (1) investing in and prioritizing youth of color, (2) ensuring high-quality youth work experiences, and (3) embedding youth voice in planning, process, and service delivery.



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Set Standards and Fund Priorities based on LMI

WDBs are responsible for setting standards and determining funding priorities based on local LMI and the needs of employers, youth, and adults in their region. This is a large responsibility that determines the economic viability and quality of life for many communities. Consider how to use LMI when setting standards and funding priorities and:



Incorporate regional context. Each region, state, district, and municipality are distinct. Determine the best way to effectively share complex data sets throughout the ecosystem.



Review data regularly to identify market trends. LMI data can change swiftly based on myriad factors, so regular review is required for the data to be both accurate and actionable.



Standardize definitions and requirements across systems. These can be an animating force for effective cross-system alignment. For example, defining occupations that are in-demand helps to inform investments made under WIOA and Perkins and can help identify the industries and occupations that are a priority for the region, which will then help to inform work-based learning priorities and career-connected learning.

Tools for setting standards and funding priorities based on LMI:

Provide timely LMI

Numerous staff in the education and workforce system use LMI to align career-connected learning programs with in-demand careers and advising students.

In Vermont, the Business Roundtable and Vermont Agency of Commerce organized almost 100 employers to forecast new jobs across 11 critical job categories, which mobilized education partners to align resources and curricula to support this market need.

In Virginia, the Shenandoah Valley Career Hub is a collaborative effort among business, education, and economic development communities to broaden awareness of high-demand, high-wage careers in the region including through a partnership with a local TV station that featured 24 different career pathways that are high-wage and do not require a 4-year degree.

Define in-demand occupations that reflect High Wage High Demand (HWHHD) career opportunities

Translate the needs of labor, employers, and industry to help students develop the skills they need to be successful, including analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, present- and future-occupational trends, and direct input from employers.

Georgia took a regional approach to employer engagement by leveraging WIOA sector strategy efforts to support industry engagement in CTE through the Work-Source Sector Partnership initiative.



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Tools for setting standards and funding priorities based on LMI (continued):

Create and validate a list of high-value workforce credentials

The list should prioritize credentials with the highest labor market value, and these credentials should be stackable and easily transferred. These credentials should lead to occupations that are in-demand, high wage, and provide growth opportunities. In addition, ensure credentials are consistent across the state's Perkins and WIOA state plans. By taking on the role of creating aligned, standardized lists, P-12 entities can align CTE opportunities to the adult workforce development systems.



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Provide a Mechanism to Champion Employer Voice

Youth career pathway programs often span P-12, postsecondary, and the workforce development system, requiring coordination across local educational agencies (LEAs) and partnerships with employers and community-facing organizations. WDBs provide a critical connection point to employers in this coordination effort. When providing a mechanism to channel employer voice consider how to:



Engage the whole community. WDBs are conveners and should utilize this role as frequently as possible to ensure that educational and workforce development programs are tightly connected to employer demand. This should include the needs of small and large employers, as well as those with local and national representation.



Identify industries essential to economic and workforce development. With rapidly evolving technology, many jobs of the future do not exist today. WDBs can help communities prepare for this new reality by communicating with educational leaders to share information about emerging skills and industries regularly.



Partner with other labor and employer groups including employer associations, chambers of commerce, business roundtables, unions, and other groups to collect and share employer and industry needs, signal skill and occupational needs within and across industries, and build the capacity of employers to work with education and the workforce development system.

Tools for channeling employer voice:

Consider creating regional, public-facing websites

Indiana's Hoosiers by the Numbers provides a dashboard for LMI that disaggregates data by county and topic.

Other states have **created annual LMI reports or analyses that are publicly accessible**. For example, Colorado's Talent Pipeline Report provides an annual analysis of LMI and highlights talent development strategies. Colorado's public-facing intermediary then helps P-12 systems identify available work-based learning opportunities and/or youth workforce programs that align to the region's LMI and the Talent Pipeline Report.

Maryland's Department of Labor provides LMI via the LMiDashboard empowering the education and workforce development communities to make data-driven decisions.

Wisconomy is a Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development tool that provides robust labor market data visualizations to inform alignment between education programs and workforce needs.

Actively support braided funding models

Partners in Texas used funding from the local WDB to have teachers complete industry externships with key industry leaders to better understand what those industries look like so they can more effectively communicate options about careers to students.



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Tools for channeling employer voice (continued):

Leverage the power of convening

In Minnesota, the Chamber of Commerce brings together the business community and local high schools through the [Bloomington Future Leaders](#) program that includes a speaker series and mentoring on career exploration.

An initiative of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, [Kentucky's Talent Pipeline](#), was launched by the Kentucky Chamber Workforce Center to empower employers to lead on workforce development by creating employer collaboratives across the state to support talent pipeline development for key sectors.



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