



Experiences from the Field:
**Fostering Workforce
Development Partnerships
with Faith-Based
and Community Organizations**

Submitted to:



The U.S. Department of Labor
Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives,
Office of the Secretary

**Touching Lives and Communities
Pilot Initiative**

February 11, 2004



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Submitted by:

ORC MACRO™

Michelle Voll
Lindan Johnson
William Wubbenhorst

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We are indebted to the hard work of our colleagues. Special thanks for the outstanding contributions and field support of Jennifer Noyes and Rev. Alex Hurt.

Very special thanks also to our collaborators in Memphis, Tennessee, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Without their energy and countless hours of work this project would not have been possible. We are grateful for the contributions of faith-based and community leaders in both sites, the board members and staff of the Workforce Investment Board and the Mayor's Office for Faith-Based Initiatives in Memphis and for the board members and staff of the Private Industry Council of Milwaukee.

PROJECT TEAM:

Dr. William Ewald, ORC Macro, Corporate Officer

William Wubbenhorst, ORC Macro, Project Manager

Michelle Voll, Consulting Services for Community Solutions, Technical Director

Lindan Johnson, ORC Macro, Senior Consultant

Dana Addison, ORC Macro, Associate

Rev. Alex Hurt, Hurt Inner-City Ministries, Field Consultant

Jennifer Noyes, Hudson Institute, Field Consultant

Dr. Freddie John Martin, Senior Consultant

Dr. Steve Monsma, Pepperdine University, Research Consultant

Stephen Lazarus, Center for Public Justice, Research Consultant

SECRETARY OF LABOR ELAINE L. CHAO



In this report, you will find valuable information about the Touching Lives and Communities pilot projects in Memphis, Tennessee, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and examples of how Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) and faith-based and community organizations (FBCOs) can work together.

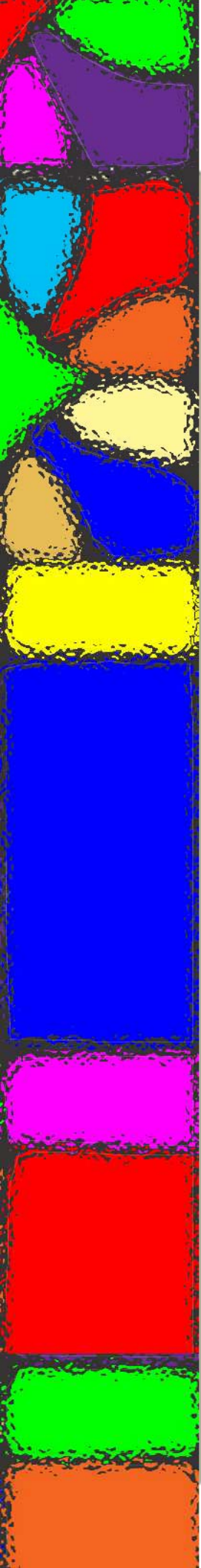
In October 2002, the U.S. Department of Labor's Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives launched the Touching Lives and Communities project in Memphis and Milwaukee to bridge the divide between local WIBs and FBCOs. Our preliminary findings show that WIBs and FBCOs can find ways to cooperate when they share a commitment to improving the employability of hard-to-serve individuals in their communities and developing economic development resources.

I had the opportunity and privilege to speak to members of the Workforce Investment Board, business leaders and members of the FBCO community in Memphis in October 2003 and was very pleased with the level of commitment and early progress being made to address the training and employment needs in their community. My hope is that these projects will encourage other local workforce investment systems to create their own models for building partnerships with FBCOs.

We are very proud of the work that the Department of Labor and its Center has done to empower faith-based and community organizations. I congratulate you on your interest in learning more about the Touching Lives and Communities pilot projects and how you can use that information to serve those in need in your communities. With your compassion and commitment, we can make a real difference for America.

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Section 1.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SECTION 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“The more economy, money and information become global, the more community will matter. The leadership, competence, and management of the social sector nonprofit organization will largely determine the values, the vision, the cohesion, and the performance of the 21st century society.

There is a new energy as leaders of the future embrace the opportunities in this wider world. Social sector leaders must step to the fore and, employing the strength of nonprofit missions and values, operate as the equal partner of business and government in developing responsible leaders, caring citizens, and a healthy, inclusive society. It is through alliances, partnerships, and collaborations that organizations across all sectors together build the inclusive, cohesive community that cares about all its people.”¹

—Peter Drucker

BACKGROUND. In the United States, faith-based and community organizations (FBCOs) have a long history of offering formal and informal activities that aid government agencies in the delivery of human and social services, including employability skills development and job training. FBCOs frequently have credibility in distressed communities due to their passionate commitment to the well being of clients, leadership that is known and recognized in the community, organizational flexibility and responsiveness, and grassroots delivery systems. Many of these groups are trusted pillars of their communities and constitute a gateway to social services for members of diverse socio-economic groups, including disadvantaged populations.

PURPOSE. The U.S. Department of Labor’s (DOL) Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (CFBCI) seeks to improve long-term employment outcomes for disadvantaged individuals by engaging FBCOs² in the delivery of workforce development services.

¹ Peter Drucker, quoted in *Meeting the Collaboration Challenge*. The Drucker Foundation for Nonprofit Management. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco, 2002.

² There is no perfectly inclusive definition of FBCOs. The primary goal for government is to deliver services effectively by engaging organizations that are rooted in the neighborhoods they serve, that have not yet or not fully collaborated with government services/resources and that will outlast any particular government funding stream. The secondary goal is to ensure that organizations that identify themselves as faith-based or religious are not excluded from opportunities to form partnerships based upon their identity. The U.S. Department of Labor has specifically targeted grassroots organizations to be eligible recipients or sub-recipients in Solicitations for Grant Applications in 2002 and 2003. Nonprofit grassroots organizations include religious or faith-based organizations and community organizations that have the following characteristics: (1) social and human services are a major part of their mission; (2) their headquarters are in the local community to which they provide these services (local affiliates of national social service organizations are not considered grassroots); and (3) their total annual operating budget is \$300,000 or less, or they have six or fewer full-time equivalent employees. The Department also has partnered with intermediary and coalition-type organizations that work with such grassroots organizations.

OBJECTIVES. Over the past year, a pilot project was developed to promote collaboration and integration between FBCOs and the local Workforce Investment Board (WIB) in two selected sites: Memphis, Tennessee and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The objectives of the Touching Lives and Communities (TLC) initiative included:

- Offering workforce development services to hard-to-reach populations by leveraging the assets (i.e., services and access) of FBCOs in urban, low-income neighborhoods;
- Connecting FBCO service providers and partners to the workforce investment system by including them in the decision-making and management processes of the WIB and One-Stop Career Centers; and
- Establishing mechanisms for resource sharing, both by building relationships between One-Stop staff and FBCOs and creating community resource sharing tools (for example, an Internet site). In Memphis, FBCOs were given new opportunities to participate alongside businesses in the Board's planning processes. The Memphis and Milwaukee sites also opened up new opportunities for funding of FBCOs as grantees, contractors, or sub-contractors.

The most dramatic outcome of the Memphis-Milwaukee TLC experience was the development of new networks and relationships that will improve the local workforce system. These social networks and relationships are the basis of and energy for transformation. Building relationships among people committed to strengthening the community is not always easy, but it is critical to having a sustained impact.

Memphis and Milwaukee provide working examples of ways that communities around the country can identify new resources, capitalize on the energy of FBCOs and make these organizations part of their own visions of service and workforce development. The connections fostered have built strong momentum for change. Margaret Wheatley observes:

As the network of relationships is rewoven and strengthened, the system processes new information and becomes healthier. A human community becomes stronger and more competent as new connections are formed with those formerly excluded, as it brings in those who sit on the periphery, as communication reaches more parts of the system, and as better relationships are developed.³

MUTUAL BENEFITS. FBCOs, at their best, are valuable partners and providers that offer services of the level and quality necessary for WIBs to meet performance standards under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). The workforce system can benefit from the knowledge, skills, and commitment of FBCO leaders and staff who understand the environment in which customers live and work. FBCOs provide services available outside of the scheduled program of One-Stop Career Centers. They offer training during evenings and weekends, and are historically connected to the communities where customers reside.

³ Margaret Wheatley, "Supporting Pioneering Leaders as Communities of Practice: How to Rapidly Develop New Leaders in Great Numbers." Berkana Institute, 2002.

FBCOs have a reputation for going to extraordinary lengths to meet customer needs. These are mission-driven organizations with a commitment to getting the job done.

FBCOs also have the potential to provide flexible response mechanisms for disseminating information and resources. They are compassionate with individuals who can be hard to reach and difficult to serve, including ex-offenders, at-risk youth, homeless persons, welfare recipients, and immigrants. The service delivery mechanisms of FBCOs allow One-Stop Career Centers to enhance access to programs, expand services, and leverage volunteer resources.

INSIGHTS & OBSERVATIONS. Successful efforts to integrate FBCOs and the workforce system:

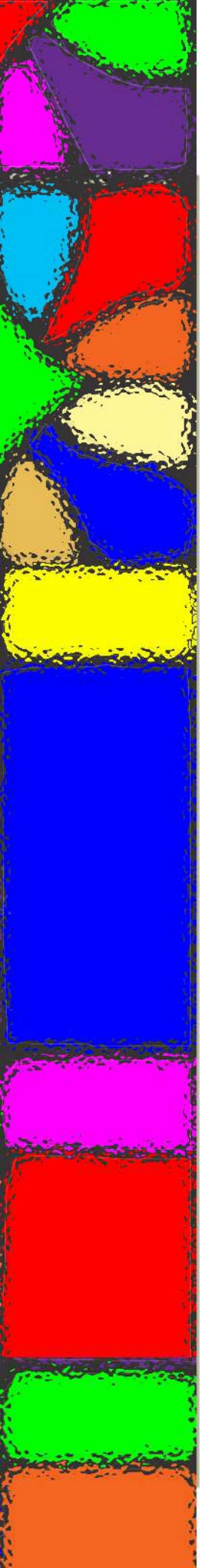
- **Are locally driven.** Any initiative to improve integration and collaboration with FBCOs, must be locally driven and supported, not seen as a “mandate” from either the state or federal level.
- **Establish clear objectives and expectations.** As a first step, consensus needs to be reached about what it means to achieve “integration and collaboration” between the local public workforce development system and FBCOs. Objectives and expectations can be seen very differently and need to be defined at the local level.
- **Establish the success factor.** “Success” can also mean different things to different participants. At the onset of the Memphis and Milwaukee pilots, WIB staff and members emphasized informational and non-financial relationships while FBCOs were more interested in forming financial partnerships and accessing WIA dollars to help pay for additional social services. Reaching agreed upon measures of success that attend to both perspectives is important.
- **Identify a shared vision and meet specific community needs.** When momentum is built around a shared vision and addresses specific community needs, WIB staff and members, FBCOs and businesses are more inclined to commit time and energy to move the collaboration forward.
- **Depend on local workforce system structures.** Given the structural differences throughout the public workforce investment system (i.e., the relationship between WIBs, city/local governments, One-Stop Career Centers, service providers, etc.), some WIBs are more open to change than others. Depending on local conditions, it may be a better investment of resources to focus on incremental change within the existing framework rather than expending time and energy to achieve changes that require a complete reworking of existing WIB practices.
- **Use a systems approach and leverage multiple program resources and funding streams.** Look for opportunities to pair an FBCO initiative with other federal and state workforce projects (i.e. welfare-to-work, ex-offender employment and assistance for limited English populations) that have separate funding streams rather than building a FBCO initiative that depends on its own funding resources.

- **Identify change agents and champions from different social networks to move the project forward on multiple fronts.** New partners have relationships with local elected officials, foundation representatives, and other faith and community leaders that can be tapped to support a faith-based and community initiative.
- **Develop a common language that promotes collaboration and action—avoid jargon and rhetoric.** Consideration needs to be given to the language used when approaching faith-based and community organizations because a common language regarding service delivery is not shared. Even the term “workforce development” does not resonate with many FBCOs.

For example, many faith-based organizations have traditionally focused on serving the needs of the whole family, or an individual in the context of the whole family, rather than on the particular job skill needs of an individual. The “holistic” approach is among the chief strengths of small FBCOs but is quite different from the targeted service provision of publicly funded programs. Workforce Boards bring a broad perspective of how workforce development should be driven by the needs of local businesses and economic development opportunities. FBCOs and WIBs need to understand their differences and create plans that use the strengths of both perspectives.

- **Utilize facilitators and intermediary organizations.** Facilitators who have served organizations in both “worlds” (i.e., government and FBCOs) and can serve as “translators” are key to the initiative. Intermediary organizations can also be very useful in building bridges between networks of people, providing technical assistance and helping to focus and aggregate the work of individual small FBCOs.
- **Target efforts towards sustainability at the local level and avoid unrealistic expectations of outside funding.** WIBs and FBCOs should seek financial support from local foundations, community groups and government to ensure long-term funding for the faith-based and community initiative rather than depending on short-term funding from federal and state governments. In addition, WIBs and FBCOs should manage expectations with regard to new grant and contracting opportunities to avoid the problem of “dashed hopes” and cynicism among FBCOs that are contacted by the WIB or its intermediary to take part in the project.
- **Are patient.** Change at the local level takes time; not all successes are going to be immediately quantifiable. It is important to identify outcomes, define success, and keep track of progress from the beginning. The workforce system is comprised of many “moving parts” and a wide-range of institutional relationships and dynamics. Change at the local level requires vision, trust, adequate time for coalition building and persistence.

THE WIB-FBCO INTEGRATION REPORT. This report seeks to share the experiences, observations, and recommendations gathered during the CFBCI pilot projects in Memphis and Milwaukee. Section 2 discusses the workforce system in each city, the collaboration, relationship-building stages and implementation strategies. Section 3 presents highlights and “success factors” identified from the two pilot projects. The accompanying appendices provide greater detail on survey data and instruments.



Section 2.

TOUCHING LIVES AND COMMUNITIES: MEMPHIS & MILWAUKEE PILOT PROJECTS

SECTION 2.

TOUCHING LIVES & COMMUNITIES: MEMPHIS & MILWAUKEE PILOT PROJECTS

In today's world there is a constant requirement for organizations in all sectors—public, private, social, profit and nonprofit—to undergo nearly continuous learning and reinvention. Organizations must be responsive, agile and have the ability to meet new challenges and discard strategies and approaches that are outdated or ineffective.

In this environment of constant and accelerating change, WIBs and FBCOS must continually identify community needs and develop strategies for addressing them. What's more, they must have a “knowledge sharing” system that permits communication across sectors.

NAVIGATING A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER WORKFORCE SYSTEM

Any new collaboration or initiative needs to start with a question: How will this effort help my local workforce system operate more effectively and efficiently? The workforce investment system is comprised of a diverse cross-section of stakeholders from government, business, and nonprofits, each one with somewhat different goals and measures of success.

Traditional approaches consider development efforts as driven by needs instead of driven by local capacity. In the models developed in Memphis and Milwaukee, successful collaboration and community capacity development was internally focused on leveraging local assets. The key to regeneration is locating all the available assets in a community and harnessing those assets for local development purposes.⁴

An asset-based development strategy seeks to recognize, map, and mobilize the strengths of individuals, associations, and institutions in the community. The strategy starts with what is present in the community and concentrates on the agenda-setting and problem-solving capabilities of local community residents, associations, and institutions.

The TLC Project Team: Strategy and Composition

The Touching Lives and Communities (TLC) initiative invited a wide array of stakeholders to come together and participate in the Memphis and Milwaukee pilot projects. The mindset of the TLC Project Team—CFBCI contractors and partners—was one of “coming alongside” area stakeholders with the aim of developing a local infrastructure of engaged, committed change agents in the workforce system who would bring their own solutions to the table. Special care was taken to present the role of the TLC Project Team as “facilitators” in the

⁴ John P. Kretzmann and John McKnight, *Building Communities From the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing A Community's Assets*, ACTA Publications, 1993.

pilot projects. The collaboration process was designed to give local leaders the opportunity to identify and be responsible for the outcomes of the project.

Key contacts at different levels of institutions, including city government, workforce development entities, businesses, and a wide range of faith-based and community organizations were developed. The FBCO included grassroots organizations, churches and organized community development corporations.

The TLC Project Team included experts in faith-based workforce development with backgrounds in organizational and community development, collaboration building, communications, strategic planning, technical assistance, training, evaluation and workforce activities. This included team members who were trusted and known by local stakeholders, as well as team members from outside the pilot cities. Both types of team members served as bridge-builders among religious, civic, government, and business sectors.

As intended, the networks of relationships that were started as a result of the TLC pilot project grew in scope and size. Businesses found new community partners to help them meet labor needs. Organizations and individuals who previously might not have returned each other's telephone calls built mutually beneficial partnerships. City government agencies with closely aligned concerns and missions began collaborating for the first time. Faith leaders overcame denominational differences to collaborate on grant applications. New sources of financial support, both public and private, emerged to support the integration of FBCOs with the local WIBs.

MAKING THE CASE: IDENTIFYING BENEFITS & OPPORTUNITIES

To launch a new initiative and unite stakeholders in a common purpose, it is important to demonstrate how the workforce system and the local community will benefit from including faith-based and community organizations that have not previously participated in WIA-funded service delivery. As with every successful partnership, the successful integration of FBCOs with the workforce system depends upon all parties viewing the project as a “win-win” scenario.

In Memphis, for example, action groups consisting of WIB members and FBCO leadership worked together to identify opportunities for collaboration. After assessing potential “points of connection” the action group made proposals that ranged from establishing neighborhood resource centers to providing more localized career services, to forming a Faith-Based and Grassroots Council to serve as an advisory body to the WIB.

The Milwaukee Private Industry Council (PIC), which serves as the Milwaukee WIB, already had a number of contracting mechanisms available for qualified FBCOs. The TLC strategy in Milwaukee emphasized a systems approach. The project team, in addition to its work in bringing together interested FBCOs, was able to work directly with PIC staff to identify entry points for FBCOs through the many solicitations and contract vehicles already in place. The TLC project was also able to examine referral patterns for One-Stop

caseworkers to insure that FBCOs that did become qualified vendors actually received referrals.

A VALUABLE RETURN ON INVESTMENT

WIBs that decide to leverage the assets and strengths of new, non-traditional providers can significantly expand the system's capacity beyond current boundaries. In doing so, they can expect a number of valuable returns on their investment.

The immediate question for most WIBs, of course, is whether the board will be eligible for additional funding. The answer may be "yes," since the U.S. Department of Labor has placed a high priority on creating new grant opportunities encouraging linkages between the workforce system and FBCOs. Congress has not passed WIA re-authorization legislation as of January 2004, but drafts of the bill contain new incentives for WIBs to work with "hard-to-serve" populations in their communities. To take full advantage of these potential incentives, it will likely require WIBs to increase outreach to FBCOs.

More importantly, a WIB that functions as a neutral convener or broker in the community can leverage WIA dollars through grant-making strategies. A WIB, for example, can leverage its dollars by engaging FBCOs in customized training (which can include soft skills development) that requires employers to provide at least 50 percent of the cost.⁵ As a funding broker, the WIB can also help FBCOs to qualify for matches from philanthropic and corporate foundations and city government agencies.

There are other returns on the investment, some measurable and some intangible, including:

- Enhanced access to hard-to-reach populations;
- Mutual referrals;
- More flexible or responsive service delivery mechanisms;
- Better training;
- Long-term employment and retention outcomes with populations of disadvantaged communities;
- System-wide cost savings through resource sharing, elimination of duplicative activities, customer-oriented contracting, and volunteer service; and
- Increased potential for additional and new funding streams as a result of expanded new partnerships.

⁵ Customized training is designed to meet the special requirements of an employer or group of employers, conducted with the commitment by the employer(s) to employ the individual upon successful completion of the training, and funded in part by the employer(s) or training provider(s).

In sum, there are both short-term benefits and long-term advantages for WIBs to begin the work of understanding, reaching out, and ultimately incorporating the effort, energy and commitment of FBCOs for the benefit of the community.

WORKFORCE SYSTEMS IN PILOT SITES

One of the clearest lessons learned from the TLC pilot experiences in Memphis and Milwaukee was the extent to which the structure of the local workforce system (i.e., the WIBs and One-Stop Career Centers) influences the strategy for FBCO integration. Among the 600 workforce investment areas around the country, there are a number of different workforce system structures ranging from governmental to nonprofit administered structures. The system structure is defined by the relationship between the city/county government, the WIB, board-staffing agency, One-Stop Centers, and service providers. Every locality has its own variations as to how these entities are related.

The TLC pilot sites are at opposite ends of the spectrum of systems structures. The Memphis site represents a government-administered system. The city government administers and manages WIA programs, staffs the WIB, and services customers through a single administrative structure. The Milwaukee site, in contrast, represents a nonprofit structure with no direct involvement of city government. The Public Industry Council (Milwaukee WIB) is structured as a 501(c)(3) organization and provides administrative functions and contracts services to either for-profit or nonprofit entities.

It is important to understand the structural differences in workforce investment areas because workforce system operations shape the challenges and opportunities that FBCOs encounter when seeking to provide services in that system.

WHY MEMPHIS AND MILWAUKEE?

The pilot cities, Memphis and Milwaukee, were selected from among a number of cities or counties in ten states (California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, New Jersey, Ohio, Tennessee, Texas, and Wisconsin). The TLC Project Team selected these ten states by conducting a scan of the country for workforce investment areas using the following selection criteria:

- The WIB demonstrated the commitment and enthusiasm to become a pilot site for the initiative, which means that support came not only from the executive staff of the WIB but also from board members themselves;
- The WIB had the support of local elected officials to integrate faith-based and grassroots organizations into the workforce system;
- The WIB had the organizational infrastructure and monetary resources to support and make operational an intervention of this kind;

- FBCOs were committed to working with the WIB and showed sufficient capacity to engage in collaborative efforts;
- The integration or collaboration with FBCOs was either nascent or not yet begun;
- The WIB and FBCOs encompassed a workforce investment area including urban, low-income neighborhoods (as determined by U.S. Census Bureau data); and
- Faith-based and community networks supported the adoption and mobilization of the project in other localities throughout the country.

THE TLC MEMPHIS-MILWAUKEE APPROACH

In Memphis, an organizational/group process strategy was designed to build consensus among a large and diverse set of stakeholders on a common vision, goals, and objectives. The primary concern was the extent to which the WIB was adequately serving the employment and training needs for those hard-to-reach, inner-city, low-income residents. In particular, the TLC team sought to identify and address both geographic and cultural barriers that impeded access to needed services.

Milwaukee, by contrast, was better suited to a network approach. The project sought to develop relationships and improve communication between PIC staff and specific FBCO leaders, as well as among FBCOs themselves. Like Memphis, the TLC project in Milwaukee sought to broaden access to workforce development resources in underserved neighborhoods. Unlike Memphis, however, which required a system change in the way workforce development activities were conducted through a new competitive contracting pilot, Milwaukee already had the contracting systems in place. Milwaukee needed a strategy to create new relationships between existing workforce providers and smaller grassroots FBCOs that demonstrated close ties to the communities they served.

TLC IN MEMPHIS

The WIB in Memphis is responsible for policy and program oversight in local Workforce Investment Area 13 that encompasses the City of Memphis, Shelby County and Fayette County. The mission of the WIB is to foster workforce development that ensures residents have family-sustaining careers and businesses have a qualified workforce.

The Memphis-area WIB consists of 52 board members with an annual budget of \$11 million. The administrative structure that encompasses all managerial and service functions in Memphis is called the Workforce Investment Network (WIN), which employs about 50 city employees. In Memphis, the executive director of WIN is accountable to the City of Memphis, as is typical in a government-based workforce structure.

The WIA core and intensive services for adults are provided by the downtown Memphis Area Career Center plus six additional One Stop locations. The Career Center and its satellites house both required WIA partners and WIN city employees. The WIA partners

integrate and coordinate program activities. Training services are outsourced through Individual Training Account vouchers to training providers certified by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission and approved, according to local criteria, by the WIB's Performance and Accountability Committee.

The overall unemployment rate in Shelby County is below 6 percent. In areas designated as Renewal Communities by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the unemployment rate is 18.6 percent and 79.06 percent of households are designated as low income. The median household income in these communities is \$16,297 compared to \$39,593 for all of Shelby County (U.S. Census 2000). For the Memphis initiative, the TLC partners, including the WIB and City Mayor's Office, decided to make the inner-city neighborhoods of Memphis the prime focus for engaging FBCOs.

Challenges & Opportunities

For those intending to create new FBCO and workforce system partnerships, the challenge is to provide opportunities for faith-based and community organizations to participate in the service delivery while adequately responding to other stakeholders concerned about sharing resources and funding new partners.

In government-driven systems like Memphis, it is not readily apparent how financial partnerships with grassroots organizations can be fostered since contractors outside of the WIB's administrative structure of the city government are not used for service delivery. In order to establish financial partnerships with FBCOs, the system would have to be flexible enough to contract out particular services through a competitive process.

This does not mean the government-based structure itself has to change, but it does require the ability to reallocate funds. Existing stakeholders both inside and outside government need reassurance that the proposed reallocations are incremental and that the benefits to the local system outweigh potential costs.

Memphis Research Sampling

Before formal planning activities began, the TLC Project Team supported the WIB's effort to better understand the options and opportunities for FBCO integration by conducting surveys both internally to WIB members themselves and externally to a targeted component of FBCOs.

After Memphis was selected as a pilot site, the WIB executive director sponsored and conducted an informal survey with board members. Out of fifty-five (55) members, thirty-seven (37) responded to a written questionnaire designed to give greater insight into board members' awareness of the President's and the U.S. Department of Labor's faith-based and community initiatives and their perception of the potential for partnerships with faith-based and community-based organizations.

The assessment gauged the potential for collaboration between the WIB and FBCOs in a number of program areas, including: technical and hard skills training, employability skills, life

skills, mentoring, job placement and referral, youth employment and training, childcare, and housing.

The executive director found that there was a strong interest among WIB board members in developing partnerships with faith-based and community-based groups, on both a financial and non-financial basis.⁶

In Memphis, the TLC initiative was conducted in partnership with the Mayor's Office for Faith-Based Initiatives. The Mayor's Office, in conjunction with the Memphis WIB, sponsored and conducted a brief survey and programmatic inventory and received responses from 210 FBCOs. This provided the WIB with insight into FBCOs' knowledge of and interest in workforce development issues, as well as their potential interest in partnering with Career Centers in offering workforce development services in the Memphis area.

The major conclusion reached from this assessment was that African-American congregations, and other community- and faith-based groups to a slightly lesser degree, constituted a large, untapped workforce development resource in the Memphis area. Leaders had the commitment to workforce development but lacked access to partnerships/relationships with the current system and needed to develop their own capacity to deliver services.

Their knowledge level regarding workforce development at the time of the survey was low and the resources they were able to commit limited, but their interest in, and the importance they attached to, workforce development issues was high as was their willingness to partner with Memphis Area Career Center.

The TLC Memphis Strategy

With the survey data in hand, the executive director of the WIB formed a task force to undertake strategic planning for the pilot project. This working group consisted of a representative from the Mayor's Office for Faith-based Initiatives and a small group of WIB board members recommended by the executive director. Eventually, the taskforce was expanded to include faith and community leaders and soon evolved into a coalition-building process involving 30-40 community or faith leaders and workforce system leaders. Meetings became the means to reach out to new partners to facilitate relationship building and networking.

The project team used a consensus-building action model to engage task force members, inviting local participants to take responsibility for the development and implementation of objectives and tasks agreed upon in meetings. The action group's representatives worked collaboratively to respond to specific needs identified in the community and to formulate strategies for implementation.

⁶ The WIB sampling was supplemented with open-ended interviews to solicit board member and staff ideas on the process and strategy for implementation of the initiative.

The action teams were driven by the passion of leaders who dedicated their time to creating a community-wide vision. The needs of the inner city were particularly important, and the TLC project focused its attention on engaging leaders within the African-American church.

Specific proposals included strategies for integrating FBCOs in the Board's decision-making process, as well as how to engage FBCOs in direct workforce development services. During this consensus-building process, the project team offered technical assistance, outreach, and facilitation. The TLC project team also assumed responsibility for tracking and evaluating the progress of the action groups.

During the later phase of the project, the Memphis TLC project team leader worked with the chair of the Board to prepare a strategic plan, which was further refined and adopted at the WIB's annual strategic planning session in July 2003. Despite a number of issues and concerns that arose out of structural constraints, the board adopted, for the first time in the history of its WIA adult service delivery, a competitive process by issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) for intermediaries to provide technical assistance and to sub-grant services to faith-based and grassroots providers.

Memphis TLC Action Plans

Members of the task force, including workforce and FBCO leaders, developed a wide range of implementation plans, including:

- The development of neighborhood resource centers to provide information on WIB resources and services for job placement and training;
- RFPs for employability skills or soft skills training and for an intermediary to engage small- to mid-sized FBCOs; and
- Customized training in partnership with Memphis employers.

NEIGHBORHOOD RESOURCE CENTERS. Task force members from Trinity and Golden Gate Development Corporations of the Mt. Vernon Baptist Church – Westwood and the Golden Gate Full Gospel Baptist Church developed the concept of creating community resource centers in neighborhoods with the highest percentages of unemployment and poverty levels. Neighborhood Resource Centers (NRCs) provide extensions of services offered at Career Centers.

The NRCs connect and service jobseekers who are more comfortable in neighborhood locations that utilize the physical space of FBCOs and leverage the trusting relationships their leaders hold with the community. These “mini-centers” offer kiosks with Internet connections for customers to access the services offered by the Career Centers. The staff or volunteers of the faith-based or community-based organization are trained by the WIB staffing agency that will share some of its staff to participate in assisted services at these locations.

As part of the TLC communication strategy, www.MemphisFBO.org was created to facilitate learning and networking among nonprofits and connect FBCOs and customers to the local workforce system. The website will eventually link all neighborhood “mini-centers” and serve to mobilize a volunteer assistance network. It will also provide a databank for local service providers and recruit new leaders to collaborate with the WIB and its staffing agency on various programs.⁷

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS. The leaders of Golden Gate Corporation and Community Development Council of Greater Memphis developed, in conjunction with the WIB Consortium partners, a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the development of employability skills.

A large segment of jobseekers need to acquire basic life management skills, employability skills, and readiness skills before they can enter the job market or even benefit from the services offered by One-Stop Career Centers. The aforementioned survey of Memphis FBCOs showed that a number of faith institutions have both formal and informal programs in the soft skills/life skills area that could be more closely connected with the menu of services provided by the Memphis workforce system.⁸

Through the action group deliberations, the WIB determined that local employers would benefit from additional employability skills services for potential employees.⁹ The WIB has an opportunity to establish new partnerships to meet this critical need by utilizing and leveraging FBCO capacity in this area of employability skills development.

This type of collaboration combines the tangible assets of FBCOs and congregations (physical space and relationships) with intangible assets (ethics, values, knowledge, connections, moral/emotional support, etc.) to offer employability skills and readiness mentoring programs that maximize FBCOs’ contributions.

INTERMEDIARY ORGANIZATIONS. The WIB staffing agency also used these action plans to create a Request for Proposals (RFP) for intermediaries¹⁰ to engage faith-based and grassroots organizations in workforce development related activities.

The RFP outlined the following activities for funding:

- Help WIN staff support and develop additional Neighborhood Resource Centers within the service area (Memphis, Shelby or Fayette Counties), to be operated by staff of faith-

⁷ The Department of Labor invested \$17.5 million dollars in 2002 to strengthen the One-Stop Career System by creating active and committed faith-based and community organization partners. A number of grantees and sub-grantees created access models, and case studies on two of these grantees are available in CFBCI’s “Bridging the Gap: Meeting the Challenge of Universal Access through Faith-Based and Community Partnerships.”

⁸ The survey of the Mayor’s Office showed that seventy-three (73) faith-based organizations currently provide employment enhancement skills or life skills training and some programs also include job placement and referral.

⁹ Employers are seeking entry-level employees who are motivated, understand appropriate behaviors for the workplace, can balance their family responsibilities with work obligations, and are reliable and on time. The development of employment enhancement skills and competencies include communication, thinking and cognitive abilities, conflict resolution, anger management, interpersonal and teamwork skills, habits of punctuality and regular attendance, physical appearance and dress, and a strong work ethic.

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Labor ETA/ ODEP has published “Intermediary SGAs”. While the Department is not interested in creating an additional administrative burden, it is essential.

based and other community organizations. The Neighborhood Resource Centers shall serve as a resource for providing WIA core and intensive services to a wide-range of adult clients (including, but not limited to, senior citizens, unemployed adults, and adults engaged in basic education, ESL, GED completions, and/or post-secondary degree or certificate completion).

- Assist in overseeing activities conducted at selected faith-based/community-based NRCs within the local community by: 1) keeping the faith-based providers updated on workforce development programs and activities as well as policies and procedures; and 2) convening them to offer orientation and technical assistance to address accountability, evaluate program outcomes and incorporate best practices.
- Increase the number of FBCOs serving as committed and active partners in the Career Center delivery system by conducting outreach activities or neighborhood job fairs; creating a catalog of faith-based/community-based providers; developing neighborhood business and employment guides; and establishing “continuum of care” service providers.
- Plan and implement effective ways to strengthen linkages with faith-based organizations and increase viable resources in areas of greatest need to ensure that residents facing unique barriers to education and/or employment have access to workforce services. Funding would cover the cost of brochures and resources on the Memphis Area Career Center website as well as special meetings, conferences, etc.).¹¹

CUSTOMIZED TRAINING. The leader of Uptown Alliance, a faith-based grassroots group, developed a partnership with the Memphis Marriott Downtown to provide customized, hospitality sector training to improve low-income residents’ access to employment opportunities with potential for career advancement. Uptown Alliance identified a number of key partners, including the Klemmons Wilson School and The Skills, Tasks, and Results Training Program (START), developed by the American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute and designed specifically to serve targeted clients such as at-risk youth, welfare-to-work populations, dislocated workers, or ex-offenders.

Under WIA, local WIBs can design customized training programs through arrangements with employers and third-party trainers. WIA funds cover up to 50 percent of out-of-pocket training expenses (instructor salaries, training materials, etc) and a single employer or group of employers must provide the remaining training costs and commit to hiring the trainees.

Customized Training provides the opportunity for a faith-based or community organization to collaborate with local employers, the WIB, and other stakeholders to assist and qualify workers for industry-specific employment.

Once the Memphis WIB designates customized training dollars for this purpose, a number of FBCOs may be interested in participating in serving special populations with training and

¹¹ Quoted from Request for Proposals for Faith-Based Intermediary Services, courtesy of the Workforce Investment Network, Memphis.

placement services. The Uptown Alliance is starting its program with funding from the local Assisi Foundation.

TLC IN MILWAUKEE

As mentioned previously, the TLC project team took a decidedly different approach in its work with the Milwaukee PIC. The PIC already had some pre-existing relationships with a number of larger FBCOs, both in the areas of adult and youth services. Also, unlike Memphis, the PIC already had contracting mechanisms in place for engaging nonprofits, including FBCOs, as partners in the delivery of workforce development services. The challenge for the Milwaukee project, in particular, was to help the PIC engage some of the small-to-medium-sized FBCOs with strong community connections and relationships to improve the reach of the PIC.

Milwaukee is the only Workforce Development Area (WDA) in Wisconsin that consists of one county. In 2001, Milwaukee County accounted for 16 percent of the state's labor force and 18 percent of the state's population. The WIB within the Milwaukee County WDA is the Private Industry Council (PIC) of Milwaukee County, Inc.

The PIC is a nonprofit organization with 37 board members and approximately 125 personnel as part of its board-staffing agency, with a budget of \$28 million. Under the Milwaukee model, the President/CEO of the PIC is accountable to the board.

In Milwaukee, the vast majority of workforce services are provided under contracts awarded on a competitive basis through Request for Proposals or Request for Services (RFS). Case management services are provided by organizations that contract with the PIC and serve as designated WIA agents.

The contracted WIA agents or operators of Job Centers provide the core or basic adult services within their facilities. The Job Center operators include for-profit organizations such as MAXIMUS and nonprofit organizations such as the YWCA. Clients can obtain intensive services with a voucher at organizations that contract with the Job Centers. Case managers refer clients to providers pre-approved by the PIC.

As in Memphis, state-certified providers offer vocational training and case managers direct clients to Individual Training Account (ITA) providers. In addition to its WIA responsibilities, the PIC functions also as a local monitoring body for welfare reform initiatives (W-2 and TANF funds were used to establish the facilities that now house the contractors for the Job Centers).

The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development reports Milwaukee's unemployment at 7.9 percent (December 2003).¹² Furthermore, a 2003 University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee (UWM) report stated that the most recent U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data (2001) ranked the Milwaukee area highest nationally in both its African-American unemployment rate (17.4%) and the gap between black and white unemployment

¹² www.dwd.state.wi.us/lmi/laus_view_current.htm#M

rates (13.3%).¹³ In response, the Milwaukee TLC project team focused on Adult Intensive Services in the inner city of Milwaukee.

Milwaukee Research Sampling

The Milwaukee PIC staff also sponsored and conducted an informal survey of board members to gauge their awareness and interest in the TLC initiative. Seventeen of the 37 members responded to a written questionnaire regarding their awareness and perception of the federal faith-based and community initiative, as well as their sense of potential for collaborations with FBCOs in a number of program areas either directly or indirectly related to workforce development.

The PIC President discovered that, although PIC members' awareness of the national initiative was very low, there was a high recognition of the importance of FBCOs. There was also very positive sentiment expressed regarding the potential for collaboration between the PIC and FBCOs working in this area.

The PIC staff also sponsored and conducted an assessment with a small sampling of 31 faith-based organizations in the Milwaukee Metropolitan region. The purpose of this assessment was not to represent the experience and interest of all FBCOs in Milwaukee, but to provide some initial insights into the knowledge, interest, and commitment of these organizations to workforce development needs in their communities.

In comparison to the Memphis assessment, the Milwaukee sample was specifically targeted towards faith-based organizations and congregations that were known to be active in providing social, economic, and workforce development related programs, which explains the significantly higher percentages of respondents with workforce development program experience in comparison to the Memphis sample.

Participating faith-based organizations demonstrated a very high level of familiarity with the PIC overall, but were not as familiar with any of the actual Job Centers themselves.¹⁴ Both interest and importance of job placement and training were very high among respondents, as well as the interest in both financial and non-financial partnerships to provide better access to employment and training services to the community.

There was also a high level of resources currently being committed by these 31 FBCO respondents to the issue of workforce development, which was further evidenced by the percentage of faith-based organizations with formal or informal programs/ministries in the areas of soft skills/mentoring (68%), technical/hard skills training (55%), and job assessment/placement (48%).

¹³ www.uwm.edu/Dept/CED/publications/stealth_depression803.pdf

¹⁴ Surprisingly, the faith-based organizations were even less aware of what peer organizations were doing, which points to the need for greater coordination and communication. This is a strong indicator for the need of an intermediary organization to facilitate both vertical (i.e., the PIC and the Job Centers) and horizontal (i.e., among other FBCOs) communication. This communication need is further underscored by the near unanimous desire to learn more about the Job Center Network (94% saying it would be valuable or slightly valuable).

Opportunities and Challenges

In a nonprofit administered structure, workforce system leaders face the challenge of finding access points to the system. At first glance, this model would seem to provide significant opportunities for faith-based and grassroots organizations to participate in the workforce system by taking part in the competitive bid process.

The challenge is that in most competitive systems the larger, more sophisticated nonprofits/for-profits have already established track records and relationships with workforce investment authorities. The case managers, under contract, often have pre-existing notions of the type of services and service providers best able to serve their clients. In a competitive system, the inclusion of new partners also means that current stakeholders can lose funding as dollars are reallocated to new providers who are successful in the bidding process.

The PIC chose to not form a task force but instead suggested the identification of specific opportunities within the existing system to encourage collaboration between the PIC and members of the community. The project team leader worked jointly with a PIC staff person assigned to this initiative by the PIC president to identify such opportunities. In addition, while identifying specific contracting opportunities for FBCOs, the team also developed relationships with a number of intermediaries, one in particular that serves African-American grassroots faith-based organizations.

The TLC Milwaukee Strategy

As noted, in contrast to Memphis, the vast majority of workforce development services in Milwaukee are provided under contracts awarded on a competitive basis through a RFP or a RFS process. The PIC staff and project team jointly conducted an analysis of contracting opportunities that might be available to FBCOs. After considering a number of different contracting opportunities, the team focused on three in particular and identified a fourth opportunity for future planning.

The first initiative represents a creative effort to partner existing providers with new, non-traditional FBCO partners and their unique assets and social capital as a means of increasing the reach of workforce development services, particularly among hard-to-reach populations, including ex-offenders. These FBCO partners were smaller organizations run by residents of targeted communities. The second represents an effort to include new, non-traditional FBCOs in the direct provision of services. The third opportunity seeks ways to build relationships between FBCOs and the workforce system through a better understanding of the referral process. The fourth focuses on future opportunities to expand FBCOs' options in the case management process.

Below is a brief description of these four initiatives, developed by the TLC project in collaboration with the PIC adult intensive services staff:

- Welfare-to-Work: Developing new partnerships to support employment training and job placement for ex-offenders;

- Adult Intensive Services: Including FBCOs in the provision of adult intensive services through capacity building and other efforts;
- Case Manager Outreach and Educations: Improving the communication link between FBCOs and Milwaukee Job Centers and raising awareness about the ability of FBCOs to provide workforce development services;
- Case Management: Developing new partnerships to provide options for case management.

WELFARE-TO-WORK. The PIC refers to its Welfare-to-Work program as “Willing to Work.” The PIC manages this DOL funding stream in addition to WIA funding. The Welfare-to-Work program is implemented in collaboration with the Milwaukee County Department of Child Support Enforcement, the Wisconsin Department of Corrections, and other agencies to provide eligible, non-custodial parents access to employment, training, and supportive services to prepare them to become productive citizens.

The opportunity here was to develop strategies to work with existing contractors to develop sub-contracting relationships with unconventional partners.

The New Hope, Holy Redeemer and Word of Hope Collaboration—The PIC selected the New Hope Project, Inc., a nonprofit, community-based organization, to provide job placement, retention, and retention support services for the PIC’s Willing-to-Work program for the 2003-04 program year. The New Hope Project was selected through a competitive Request for Proposals process, following the PIC’s standard operating procedures.

The New Hope Project—which is widely recognized at national as well as international levels for its work in helping low income adults get out of poverty through work—has a history of building and maintaining relationships with various other community organizations in delivering services. Under the TLC initiative, the leaders of two faith-based organizations, Holy Redeemer COGIC Social Services and Word of Hope, developed relationships with The New Hope Project to provide services required under its contract with the PIC.

To the extent that funding is available, these two organizations—Holy Redeemer COGIC Social Services and Word of Hope—will sub-contract to The New Hope Project and provide services to the ex-offender population, based on their past experience. Currently, Word of Hope provides employment training and job development to male and female offenders who are under the supervision of the Wisconsin Department of Corrections. These services include job development activities such as contacting employers on behalf of offenders, monitoring offender’s job contacts, and referring offenders to other service agencies. COGIC Social Services offers similar services through counselors and social workers that provide counseling, mentoring and preventive programs encompassing a broad range of issues, including workforce readiness training.

WIA TITLE I (ADULT INTENSIVE SERVICES). Adult Intensive Service Providers are pre-approved by the PIC and may offer services related to comprehensive and specialized assessments, development of individual employment plans, group and individual counseling and career planning, case management, short-term pre-vocational services, basic skills/GED

services, and provision of, or referrals for, supportive services. Unique to Milwaukee is the fact that the PIC contracts out intensive services. Qualified WIA participants are empowered to choose from the list of eligible providers to receive services.

One of the challenges to integrating FBCOs in this area is the simple fact that smaller or newer organizations will need to demonstrate a track record comparable to larger or more traditional service providers. At the same time, it is important for case managers who refer clients to groups on the Intensive Service list to recognize the unique capabilities that these service providers have to offer to target populations. WIA is about the importance of partnerships that utilize partners' special capabilities and access to customers rather than about the specific breadth of one organization. By including a more diverse range of service providers on the official provider list, customers can better meet their own particular training and/or employment needs.

Thus, the opportunity here was to develop strategies to promote the inclusion of FBCOs in the PIC's Intensive Service Provider Network using the existing RFS process.

THE OPPORTUNITIES INDUSTRIALIZATION CENTER AND FAITH PARTNERSHIP NETWORK COLLABORATION. Faith Partnership Network (FPN) is an organization that provides intermediary services to assist FBCOs in developing and demonstrating their capacity to provide workforce development services. Faith Partnership Network exists to transform lives of individuals by building organizational capacity and collaborative relationships among partners. Within the confines of the TLC project, FPN's mission is to answer the need in the Milwaukee community for new or increased access to capacity building opportunities and resources for grassroots to mid-size, faith-based organizations.¹⁵

Concurrent with the TLC initiative, FPN developed a relationship with the Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC) of Greater Milwaukee to build the capacity of select FBCOs in Milwaukee. The FPN/OIC collaborative is currently participating in a pilot project supported by the local Helen Bader Foundation, Inc., through which grassroots FBCO participants receive various level of technical assistance designed to build their capacity to provide services.

These efforts were leveraged through additional funding provided by the Employment and Training Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor. FPN has used the DOL funding to make an accelerated effort to provide technical assistance to a select group of FBCOs that provide workforce development services. As a result, a number of FBCOs were able to meet the requirements under the RFS for the provision of intensive services issued by the PIC. These applications are currently under review by the PIC.

The initial outcome of this effort will be that a greater selection of FBCOs will qualify for the Intensive Service Provider list and be eligible to provide services to WIA participants. Concurrent to these efforts, the TLC project has also collaborated with the PIC to better understand the means by which its caseworkers know and refer clients to qualified Intensive Service providers.

¹⁵ FPN defines a grassroots organization as one that is operating with an annual budget of \$300,000 or less and a mid-size organization as one that is operating with an annual budget of \$300,001 to \$1.5 million.

CASE MANAGER OUTREACH AND EDUCATION. The TLC project team and the PIC both agreed that having qualified FBCOs included on Intensive Service Providers list was an important step towards leveling the playing field. However, if they were not in a position to receive client referrals, the overall goal of FBCO integration would not be fulfilled. The issue of referrals, in turn, relates to whether and how caseworkers understand the work of these FBCOs, particularly in terms of their presence and relationship in low-income neighborhoods throughout the city.

Therefore, the complementary step to the OIC/FPN collaboration described above is the establishment information sharing and communication linkages between some of the selected FBCOs and one or more of the seven Milwaukee Job Centers. The initial focus for this linkage will be to track clients referred to the Job Centers from these FBCOs in order to demonstrate access to a wider number of jobseekers, particularly among disadvantaged, hard-to-reach populations. However, referrals are unlikely to be made unless case managers, comprised of existing contractors in the workforce system, are aware of the nature, value and role that FBCO providers can play for certain clients.

As a first step in that effort, the PIC developed a survey for WIB case managers to gauge their perceptions of FBCOs in general and the history of referrals they have made to FBCOs, both in their current capacity and in previous positions. Although based on only a limited sampling (9 out of 24 possible respondents to date), the information collected suggests strategies to build relationships between the PIC and FBCOs.

Among the questions posed to these caseworkers was whether various approaches would be helpful to them in increasing awareness and exposure of FBCOs. Almost all of the respondents expressed positive opinions toward improved communication and the possibility of access to additional information for clients.

All but one of the caseworker respondents, for example, considered informational presentations at conferences and/or direct contact by FBCOs in individual meetings to be either somewhat or very helpful as a means of becoming more familiar with their programs and services.

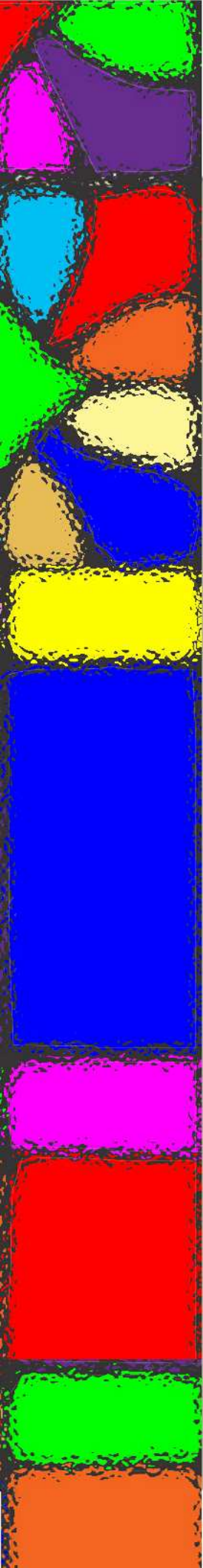
These encouraging results, in turn, support future efforts for those FBCOs that qualify as Intensive Service Providers to educate caseworkers about their programs and services. This finding further reinforces the theme of relationship building that emerged through TLC project work in Milwaukee and Memphis.

WIA TITLE I CASE MANAGEMENT. Within the current contracting process and given the capacity of larger community-based organizations that have successfully bid for contracts, it will be difficult for the PIC to contract with grassroots FBCOs for case management services. In its long-range planning, the PIC is considering the designation of a prime contractor that can sub-contract services to a grassroots FBCO, on a pilot basis, to develop a case management option.

NEXT STEPS: PILOT PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

In both pilot sites, several leaders emerged as engaged change agents who developed specific action-oriented proposals to implement the collaboration between entities of the workforce system and FBCOs. The TLC initiative has been a planning and capacity building program to assist workforce system leaders to collaborate with each other and develop the infrastructure to support their new plans. Over the next year, the workforce board in each pilot site will work with community leaders to implement these plans.

Not all successes are going to be immediately quantifiable, but quantifiable results will emerge as the programs begin and progress. It is the intent of this initiative that the new relationships and alliances formed will result not only in improved workforce performance measures but also in benefits for the larger community.



Section 3.

A PRACTICAL GUIDE: SUGGESTIONS FROM THE FIELD

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This section presents recommendations for workforce system leaders based on the experiences from the Touching Lives and Communities pilot sites in Memphis and Milwaukee. It is intended for workforce system leaders who are seeking to launch a collaborative initiative that engages FBCOs¹⁶ in resource sharing and service delivery to improve the effectiveness of the local workforce system.

There is no cookie-cutter approach for developing a collaboration process. Every community and system has unique relationship dynamics and requires solutions determined by local area stakeholders. While the strategic planning work done in Memphis and Milwaukee to build new relationships between the workforce system and FBCOs still is in an early implementation stage, the basic models for relationship building can be replicated by WIBs that seek to work more closely with FBCOs. In addition, the experiences in Memphis and Milwaukee strongly suggest that FBCOs can be valuable untapped service partners and training providers in meeting the diverse needs of customers and local businesses.

The opportunity for change within any particular workforce system is contingent on the willingness of key players to truthfully evaluate and address the gaps in workforce system services to customers and businesses. When the change is driven by real community, business, and job-seeker needs, much can be accomplished.

The preliminary indicators for success for pursuing these ‘non-traditional’ partnerships as part of a WIB’s workforce development efforts could include the following:

- Expand the coverage of the WIB into low-income, hard-to-reach populations and communities which, due to geographic, cultural or other barriers, have not been effectively utilizing WIB’s career resources to date;
- In areas experiencing rapid economic growth, serve as an effective bridge to local business labor needs and previously un-tapped labor pools (e.g., ex-offender, welfare-to-work populations) through partnerships with FBCOs that emphasis employment enhancement skills or soft skills; and
- Fulfill the legislative intent for WIBs to become true community leaders and brokers by directly linking businesses, FBCOs and other partners through provision of customized training services.

There is no specific formula for achieving collaboration between WIBs and FBCOs. However, some general recommendations can be drawn from the initial experiences in Memphis and Milwaukee.

¹⁶ A definition of FBCOs is given in Section 1.

Begin the Initiative with a Small Working Group that Can Grow as the Project Develops.

This was done by the executive directors in both the Memphis and Milwaukee pilot projects. The collaboration and alliance building process may evolve to include a large number of multi-sector stakeholders as in Memphis or a smaller number of representatives as in Milwaukee.

The goal is to bring together key players (depending on both WIB structure and targeted needs) to design the FBCO integration project and assess the opportunities and participation of the major players. When choosing leaders to identify integration opportunities, it is important to include representatives from business and small grassroots community and faith-based organizations.

The collaborative group may seek to accomplish dramatic change or incremental change. Initial goals and objectives evolve over time as stakeholders work together. Some stakeholders might drop out of the process and new ones can fill in the gap and step up to the challenge.

The overall purpose of the collaborative group is to develop an action plan for the initiative that engages new grassroots FBCOs, not part of the workforce system previously, in the delivery of services and achievement of WIA performance standards. It is crucial that the collaboration use, as its starting point, a real, tangible and measurable community need, both from the standpoint of job seekers' needs as well as those of area businesses.

One important point that may seem obvious, but cannot be overlooked, is that “the faith community” is not monolithic. There isn't *one* faith community—there are many faith communities. And even within the same denomination, different churches or temples have individual missions and plans. Members of a diverse collaborative group operate with different cultural norms and should take the time to understand one another's mission and target customers/clients. A cross-section of faiths, denominations, ethnicities, and different types and sizes of organizations and congregations enriches the collaboration.

Every Workforce System Faces Unique Challenges.

Every workforce system has a different structure, with stakeholders accountable to different institutions within the workforce system.

Workforce system leaders need to be aware that including new partners (e.g., as training providers) is often perceived as providing funding at the expense of current workforce stakeholders. These perceptions, particularly in the context of limited resources on the part of the local WIBs, often require, in the near term, creative and inclusive strategies that build partnerships between the traditional providers and the new partners.

It is crucial to define the mission and objectives of the FBCO integration effort early on and proactively address concerns of the WIB staff and existing partners. To be successful, all participants need to understand the opportunity the Faith-Based and Community Initiative represents and support it within their community.

Another key factor for success is identifying other supportive workforce system leaders. These leaders may include the chair of the WIB, the executive director or the president of the WIB staffing agency, the head of the staffing agency, the director for community outreach, and representatives of the WIB and its board committees. Frequently, the executive committee is the right place to start looking for support.

Winning the support, in advance, of as many board members and officers as possible makes it easier to carry forward the initiative, particularly if it requires the reallocation or sharing of resources with new stakeholders. Board officers and committee chairs are volunteers with limited time to devote to board duties. Some members may choose to leave the board if other demands are pressing in their lives. A project that relies too heavily on the support of one or two board members can be bogged down by changes in board staffing and governance.

For board members, the appeal of greater FBCO integration can originate from a number of sources. Many board members are already working with FBCOs and have strong relationships with them. They may be active in their own faith community or civic organization and see the potential within the context of the WIB's efforts. For others, the initiative represents a new innovative approach to long-standing challenges regarding the availability of a quality workforce. By identifying these sometimes hidden connection points in advance, the initiative is likely to garner broader support among board members.

Every system has a variety of factors that can positively and negatively influence planning and implementation of an initiative that engages FBCOs. These conditions signal the degree to which workforce system stakeholders are willing to make changes in policy, program operations, business conduct, and service delivery.

The following list contains key operating conditions that can, if developed and implemented effectively, make it easier to engage new partners and training providers in workforce development. Workforce leaders can rate the “success factors” below as strong, medium or weak in their areas. The list of qualifiers can also help in the process of determining whether a sufficient number of “success factors” are in place.¹⁷

- The Executive Leadership is supportive—the Mayor, County Executive, or WIA Local Elected Official (LEO) are committed to implementing a faith-based and community initiative;
- The faith-based and community initiative has bi-partisan support among elected local and state officials engaged in workforce policy;
- WIB members that operate workforce development programs are open to new partners;

¹⁷ The “qualifiers” were compiled using the following sources: field experience in Memphis and Milwaukee during 2003, DOL grant reports and outreach materials provided by DOL-CFBCI, and National Association of Workforce Board (NAWB) board assessment materials.

- The chair of the WIB, the executive director of the WIB staff, and the LEO agree to create an operating environment open to the participation of FBCOs in workforce development service delivery;
- Required WIA partners, private sector board members, WIB staff, and One-Stop operators are open to changing their policies and conduct of business to include FBCOs in service delivery;
- The WIB is willing to include small/grassroots FBCOs in its strategic planning process and encourage their collaboration with WIA mandatory partner agencies and service providers;
- The WIB is willing to create a communication plan to market services and activities to the community, implementing marketing strategies jointly with grassroots organizations;
- The WIB has systematic customer feedback mechanisms for continuous improvement of the workforce development system, especially for customers (jobseekers and employers) in disadvantaged communities;
- The local WIB has a positive relationship with its state workforce agency and is able to influence the certification process in order to leverage the strengths of new eligible training providers;
- The WIB has a management process that establishes accountability for the activities of board members, board staff, WIA partners, and service providers;
- The WIB and its One-Stop operators achieve state and local performance measures and analyze data to assess the overall performance of the local system, making adjustments to the objectives of the local WIA plan to improve satisfaction of customers;
- The WIB strives to examine and, if appropriate, adopt “best practices” from other workforce investment areas in order to benchmark its own work; and
- WIB/ One-Stop leadership has identified current resource sharing/ referral mechanisms and is committed to expanding these networks.

Develop an Action Plan that Supports the Mission, Goals and Objectives of the Local WIA Strategic Plan.

The overall purpose of the collaborative group is to develop an action plan for the initiative with strategies and proposals to include FBCOs in decision-making processes and delivery of workforce development services. The plan needs to state program goals, objectives, activities, outcomes and evaluation standards. It needs to define the roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders and be designed to fulfill the mission of the local WIB and the objectives of the local WIA plan.

Workforce system leaders in Memphis created an advisory council consisting of faith-based and industry leaders and this new council will become part of the existing structure. The

vice chair of the WIB serves as chair of the advisory council and ensures feedback is returned to the WIB and its Consortium, which is the program decision-making body of mandatory WIA members in Memphis. The chair of the Consortium also is a member of the advisory council and selected members of the council attend Consortium meetings. The WIB staffing agency has assigned an employee to facilitate communication between these various entities. The coordinator also is responsible for community outreach events and fields inquiries by FBCOs on partnership opportunities.

As part of the implementation plan, the task force or collaborative group may want to develop a printed and/or web-based directory of all service organizations, inclusive of new partners and providers, that can be used by One-Stop Career Centers and other workforce partners. The survey efforts of the Memphis WIB and Milwaukee PIC were a useful vehicle for outreach to local FBCOs and provided details on types of program and ministry offerings to populate just such a database.

Local workforce system leaders can also consider helping FBCOs to become state-certified and local WIB-approved training providers that can accept Individual Training Account (ITA) vouchers. This may require action at the state level and involvement of elected officials, and depends on state requirements for qualifications and certifications. In Tennessee, for example, the Higher Education Commission defines training as “vocational” and fashions criteria favoring educational institutions as applicants, which makes it too challenging for grassroots organizations to apply for consideration.

The Ability to Identify and Leverage Key Players and Networks of Associations Can Make or Break the Program Initiative.

While it is important to identify and work with the change agents and the “make it happen” people who are directly connected with the project, it is equally important to identify and get the support of the leadership of other groups and individuals that are not directly involved because they still have the potential to affect the overall initiative.

There are many tools and strategies used in the corporate world that public and nonprofit organizations are now utilizing. Conducting a social network analysis or mapping of assets can be helpful to understand the relationships among people, assess individual and organizational assets, and identify key players within those social and political networks. This involves examining both formal and informal networks, and ensuring that everyone has access to the direct flow of information.

Often the political and faith community networks and relationships are so closely intertwined that any success or mistake in one network will affect relationships in other networks. The ability to cultivate relationships at all levels is critical for success, and can prevent future problems and misunderstandings.

As one national faith-based practitioner said:

These are the kind of people that probably won't do anything to help you achieve your goal, but they could be in a position, from a political standpoint, to undo your efforts if they feel they have not been afforded the right degree of attention.

Government and ‘Policy-Speak’ Can Be Intimidating to Grassroots Organizations.

Ideally, Federal, State and local government should use plain language when working with the public and business to implement programs. In reality, government jargon often becomes part of the daily language of government officials and administrators. It can be intimidating to grassroots organizations when acronyms and program titles vary from agency to agency. WIBs and FBCOs often serve the same customers (job seekers), but have a different language, derived from distinct organizational cultures, for describing what they do and the services they offer. They need a facilitator or “translator” to establish a common language for stakeholders.

To draw stakeholders together from different social sectors, workforce system leaders can solicit the assistance of individuals at the community level who are uniquely skilled and conversant in the language and culture of both government agencies and the faith community. Such individuals can help develop a common language and thus enable clearer communication between government agencies and FBCOs. Effective cross-cultural communication skills become very important to the success of the collaboration.

Facilitators can serve an important mediating role among the various denominations represented in the area. For the workforce collaboration, the facilitator can identify key change agents in the community to partake in the task force and collaboration building process. The site implementation efforts in Memphis benefited greatly from the existence of such a facilitator at the Mayor’s Office. The task force members’ ability to take action steps with the assistance of this liaison helped to accelerate what could otherwise have been a lengthy relationship- and trust-building process.

Members of a collaborative group benefit from establishing an environment of mutual respect that will lead to trust as working relationships develop. The first working sessions should be spent sharing expectations, identifying community needs that could be met in partnership with FBCOs, articulating attainable goals and objectives, and setting a realistic timeframe for the planning and implementation phases. By making a commitment to solve problems together, stakeholders are more inclined to deal with barriers and challenges during the course of developing new partnerships.

Identify and Inventory the Services and Organizations that Already Exist in the Community.

One of the basic principles of capacity building is to inventory the existing assets in the community and include the type of services and organizations that are present in the neighborhoods of the local workforce investment area. Workforce system leaders need to understand how these existing organizations are addressing an array of social service and community needs in order to engage FBCOs as non-mandatory partners or eligible training providers.

In Memphis and Milwaukee, as noted in Section 2, the local WIB and city staff conducted surveys to gauge the faith community’s current level of awareness of the WIB, the level of importance and commitment directed to job training and placement within their

organizations, and the potential interest in collaborating with the WIB as both partners and training providers.

The data collection effort simultaneously served as an outreach vehicle. Staff administered surveys at gatherings of ministerial alliances and then gave a brief overview of services offered at local One-Stop Career Centers.

The survey findings in Memphis and Milwaukee showed a strong level of commitment and interest by FBCOs to the issue of workforce development. While employability skills/life skills training and mentoring were the most commonly cited program and ministry areas, others were also well represented, including job assessment and placement, hard skills and job training, and youth employment.

One of the most revealing findings from both Memphis and Milwaukee was the low level of awareness of faith-based organizations regarding workforce development programs conducted by their peers.

Another common area of misunderstanding regarding faith-based organizations was that they primarily, or exclusively, serve members of their own congregation. The survey findings showed that congregations and other faith-based organizations provide a wide array of services, and do so for the benefit of the communities within which they reside, not just to those who belong to their faith communities.

Intermediary Agencies Can Play a Strong Role.

Partnerships between government agencies and faith-based and community organizations are often strongest when mediated by institutions that provide the administrative, financial, legal, training, and information exchange services that faith-based and community organizations need. Intermediary organizations, especially those that are recognized by faith-based and community organizations as trusted allies, can provide these services.

Intermediaries equip, train, and support frontline, grassroots organizations to help such organizations: develop and refine their mission, capacity, and infrastructure; improve the efficiency of their operations; and make their community outreach more effective. Some intermediaries leverage additional resources for frontline organizations, securing donor funds and then re-granting these to small grassroots agencies. Still others help grassroots groups to connect to public partnerships to expand their reach and capacity.

Intermediaries can also be useful in the areas of sub-granting or sub-contracting. Some of the administrative burden of providing assistance, monitoring, and evaluating can be shifted when WIB leaders use intermediary organizations to provide technical assistance and sub-grant funding to grassroots providers.

In the case of a financial collaboration between a local WIB and FBCOs, the intermediary typically serves as the contract 'conduit' through which WIB resources may then be sub-awarded to smaller and medium-sized FBCOs. For non-financial collaborations, intermediaries constitute an important source of information and communication, exchanging and translating knowledge between the WIB and local FBCOs.

The intermediary should have sufficient experience as a service provider to give it credibility with FBCOs and provide them with the experience base necessary for effective program monitoring and evaluation. At the same time, the intermediary needs to possess the experience and knowledge to lead and coordinate a network of smaller grassroots organizations serving multiple functions at multiple sites. It should also have strong networks with local municipal and other public agencies so it can respond to all the financial and programmatic compliance demands.

Involving leaders of intermediary organizations early in the collaboration building process also will save workforce system leaders time and energy in identifying and winning the trust of grassroots networks.¹⁸

One note of caution, as a result of the initiative and the publicity surrounding it, many opportunistic organizations have “morphed” themselves into intermediaries in order to compete for these funds. Workforce system leaders must recognize and collaborate with local intermediary organizations that have developed long-standing relationships and credibility within the community.

Use Creative Approaches to Address Needs.

Workforce leaders may want to conduct an analysis of the service delivery gaps in the local system to understand how best to engage intermediary and grassroots FBCOs. Once these gaps are identified, workforce system leaders or the collaborative task force can formulate new strategies to leverage the strengths of FBCOs for specific needs of jobseekers and employers, including services related to employability skills development, job training, and post-employment services.

Workforce system leaders in Memphis and Milwaukee found that the development of soft skills (communication, business protocol, dealing with conflict) was a definite gap in the system and most businesses considered these more important than technical skills training that is often provided on the job. In Memphis, for example, the workshops offered at One-Stop Career Centers target customers who possess some degree of motivation and self-initiative and who feel comfortable in a professional office-type environment.

Even though One-Stops are designed to provide universal access, a large segment of jobseekers first need to acquire life management skills, employability skills, and other job readiness skills before they can benefit from the Career Center offerings. This represents a ‘niche market’ that FBCOs are well positioned to serve since most of their program activities are housed in neighborhood institutions familiar to jobseekers. Not only may a local congregation be a more familiar and comfortable place to visit but staff can customize and personalize the care and services they provide to the jobseeker.

The Milwaukee PIC presented many unique opportunities for increased integration and collaboration with local faith-based and community organizations. The Adult Intensive

¹⁸ In the U.S. Dept of Labor 2003 intermediary grant, intermediaries are responsible not only for sub-granting and building capacity of smaller grassroots FBCOs, but also for the total results and outcomes of these sub-grantees in response to a specifically delineated community need.

Services under WIA are provided under contract by multiple service providers. Given this opportunity, part of the Milwaukee FBCO integration strategy was to focus on increasing the number of grassroots FBCOs included as eligible providers on the Intensive Service Providers list.

Likewise, leaders of this initiative may want to identify opportunities that directly engage businesses. One way to do this is through industry-specific training for new and incumbent workers. This type of customized training is designed to meet the special requirements of an employer or group of employers, conducted with the commitment by the employer(s) to employ the individual upon successful completion of the training. The employer must pay half of the training costs and the rest is covered by WIA funds.

This arrangement is attractive to jobseekers, trainers, and employers, because it orients the training and expenditures for the training toward the specific outcome of job placement. In Memphis, a faith-based organization developed a partnership with an employer in the hospitality industry. The employer, which previously experienced a high turnover rate, is very interested in the support and mentoring provided by the faith-based organization.

Use a Systems Approach to Engage the Workforce System.

Efforts to engage FBCOs in the local workforce system should not be undertaken in a vacuum and need to be considered in the context of other federal, state, and local initiatives. Workforce system leaders need to clearly communicate the intent of the initiative and select marketing strategies targeting specific audiences.

In Milwaukee, for example, the PIC and FBCOs are involved with multiple programs across several federal, state, and local agencies and, given efforts to leverage resources across programs, are concerned about not focusing on U.S. Department of Labor WIA-specific programs in isolation from other related programs and initiatives.

There are a number of different government programs that are focused on improving employment outcomes. There is also a broad range of activities underway across Federal agencies related to further integrating and involving FBCOs into local service provision.

Build Evaluation and Feedback Measures Into the Plan From the Beginning.

WIA performance measures define what success looks like. At the same time, each local plan is customized to the needs of jobseekers and employers in the area. The two basic measures of success in integrating FBCOs are demonstration of:

1. Improved results for the hard-to-serve; and
2. Tangible results (e.g., employment numbers) and intangible results like the building of relationships and alliances, and the sharing of resources

In recent years, programs and solutions implemented in public sector organizations are shifting from an activity-based to a results-based orientation. The previous activity-driven paradigm was based on the desire to have an abundance of programs—with many activities—consuming all available resources. Even the reporting of results was based

primarily on inputs like the number of programs operated, hours devoted to the project, participants enrolled, and program costs.

Now public sector programming is moving to a results-based paradigm. Programs are only initiated when specific needs are identified and a variety of processes are used to ensure alignment with other goals, success, and results in every phase of the program—up to and including reporting the actual, measurable results from the contribution of the program.

Every WIB has to track its progress according to the WIA performance standards. But how does one measure a successful collaboration initiative that improves the workforce system and contributes to the achievement of performance measures?

In conclusion, Workforce system leaders may want to use the list below to assess the success of FBCO integration. Based on the initial experiences in Memphis and Milwaukee, these indicators can suggest whether or not the WIB has successfully removed barriers and built relationships between FBCOs and the One-Stop system, WIB and other workforce system service providers. By developing these relationships, the WIB can leverage the resources and strengths of new partners to meet performance standards. Not all the indicators will apply to each workforce system structure but the list represents a summary of different ways in which positive changes can be made in the conduct of business, policies, and service delivery structure of the workforce system.

- MOUs between One-Stops and FBCOs for mutual resource sharing, co-location, and referrals, including case management referrals;
- WIB or One-Stop community outreach staff is designated to coordinate program activities, outreach events, marketing, communication, technical assistance, and service infrastructure with FBCOs;
- WIB and One-Stops maintain updated printed and electronic directory of faith-based and grassroots providers with target populations and specific services;
- Local WIB plan, Request for Proposals, technical assistance and training materials comply with federal laws protecting the religious identity of faith-based providers;
- FBCOs partake in WIB decision-making processes and are represented on the board, standing and ad-hoc committees, and advisory council bodies;
- Identified FBCOs are representative of neighborhood diversity and demonstrate the organizational capacity and track record to serve members of their community;
- Local, grassroots intermediaries provide technical assistance and sub-grants to FBCOs for delivery of WIA core and intensive adult and dislocated worker services;
- Existing service providers recognize the value of grassroots organizations' reach to special populations and sub-grant dollars to those groups for targeted services;
- WIB contracts with faith-based and grassroots providers that are located in and serve customers in high unemployment, low-income zip codes;

- WIB uses grassroots FBCOs' greatest strengths in the development of employment enhancement or soft skills through supplemental services contracts or vouchers;
- Access points are located in FBCOs to provide WIA core unassisted and assisted services and refer jobseekers to One-Stops for next level of services;
- WIB contracts customized training program to intermediaries or FBCOs that partner with industry-specific employers;
- State Commission eligibility criteria as well as local WIB criteria and processes are inclusive of small to medium-sized FBCOs enabling their participation as certified Individual Training Account providers;
- FBCOs are engaged in serving Limited English speaking populations; and
- FBCOs are engaged in WIA funded childcare and transportation services.