



Northwest Arkansas Economic Development District

Policy Title:	Business Services
Date Approved by the Board:	March 3, 2022

**I. Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to outline the strategic vision of business service provision in the Northwest Arkansas Workforce Development Area. This policy presents required actions of WIOA partners to expand the capacity to provide business services, and capture data on business services provided to consumers.

**II. Summary and Impact**

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 created a comprehensive workforce development system that places emphasis on the role of business as a primary customer in the One-Stop Delivery System. WIOA mandates that LWDBs develop strategies to establish and sustain lasting partnerships for the delivery of business services beyond changes in One-Stop operators or career services providers. Local areas must establish and develop relationships and networks with employers and their intermediaries; convene or implement industry or sector partnerships; and may provide additional services that meet area workforce development needs in accordance with partner programs' statutory requirements. These strategies are reflected in the Northwest Arkansas Workforce Development Area Regional and Local Plan.

Full integration of business services is critical to achieving a high performing workforce development system. Under the WIOA, workforce centers and their partners ensure that businesses and job seekers have access to information and services that lead to positive employment outcomes. To support area employers and industry sectors most effectively, the Business Services Team delivers quality services that assist in overcoming the challenges of recruiting, retaining, and developing talent for the regional economy.

**III. Policy**

**A. Role of WIOA Title 1 Administrator**

The WIOA Title I Program Administrator supports the strategic planning and implementation of revitalized or enhanced business engagement activities within the state. Promoting interagency collaboration, forming partnerships, and leveraging resources will be a vital aspect in meeting the workforce needs of businesses. The WIOA Title I Administrator's role is to provide guidance and support to the local workforce development area in ensuring

implementation of this policy. In collaboration with the Business Services Coordinator, the WIOA Title I Administrator will establish a Business Services Team to ensure a strategic and focused approach to providing coordinated and consistent services to businesses. This cross-agency team of leaders will convene regularly to provide strategic direction, technical assistance, results monitoring, and enhanced business service delivery to the Northwest Arkansas Workforce Development area.

#### **B. Role of Business Services Coordinator**

The Business Services Coordinator will develop, implement, and sustain the activities for business services across the Northwest Arkansas Workforce Development Area. This position will focus on the delivery of business services through an integrated, solution-oriented approach by a cross functional team. The incorporation of an integrated and aligned business services strategy among partners presents a unified voice for the workforce center in its communication with employers and shall lead to improved skills, credentials, and employment attainment in areas driven by business demand. The Business Services Coordinator will develop new sector partnerships and strengthen existing partnerships to address local workforce needs and develop and maintain relationships with local businesses, industry representatives, and training agencies that will lead to participant career placements and stronger business relations. Under direct supervision of the WIOA Title I Administrator, the Business Services Coordinator will develop and execute strategic direction and vision for the Business Services Team in Northwest Arkansas.

#### **C. Role of LWDBs and One-Stop Centers in Providing Business Services**

LWDB's will be responsible for ensuring the coordination of business service delivery to businesses in the local area according to their local plan and the combined state plan. Coordinated efforts should be focused on creating a streamlined business process and preventing duplicative services and contacts to businesses. LWDB's are expected to execute their role through the convening of a business team and the orderly coordination of the following activities:

- Building relationships with businesses and business-focused organizations
- Integrating and streamlining business services
- Providing informational resources to businesses
- Assisting businesses with recruiting, hiring, upskilling, and training needs
- Providing customized services to businesses

#### **D. Requirements for LWDB Business Services Teams**

Business Services Teams are cross-agency, cross-programmatic groups comprised of representatives of each of the core partner agencies, economic development, and other partners as appropriate. These teams are designed to ensure a comprehensive array of services are provided to businesses.

The composition of the NWA Business Services Team shall include leadership from:

- Northwest Arkansas Economic Development District (Title I)

- Arkansas Division of Career Education (Title II)
- Arkansas Division of Workforce Services (Title III)
- Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (Title IV)
- Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind (Title IV)
- In-demand industry sectors

Each partner agency has statutory requirements for creating relationships with businesses and assisting clients through their funding in finding employment opportunities. The single point of contact is not intended to be one individual responsible for all relationships in the local workforce development area through which all businesses must go to access workforce services. All members of the Business Services Team are expected to create and strengthen business relations in the community in a coordinated and targeted manner.

The NWA Business Services Team will be responsible for the following activities:

- Evaluating, identifying, and establishing appropriate solutions to assist in the effective delivery of business services
- Assuring all workforce agencies are fully participating in the Business Services Team
- Standardizing business services outreach materials for local area adoption
- Analyzing and addressing barriers to collaboration between state, regional, and local business services teams
- Evaluating business customer satisfaction
- Mapping business solutions and providing training to LWDB staff and stakeholders on how to mobilize these resources, including peer-to-peer learning opportunities

The Business Services Team will facilitate solutions to ensure these standards are implemented:

- Standardized timeframes to respond to business inquiries and subsequent contact in order to deliver specialized and collaborative solutions to meet business needs; alternative options must be provided if the LWDB cannot provide an affirmative response to the initial request for services
- A business satisfaction tool will be implemented to assist with demonstrating continuous improvement
- Document progression towards goals

#### **E. Business Services Reporting**

LWDBs are required to track and report the number, type, size, and services provided to businesses. Using a report template, each WIOA core partner or state workforce agency will collect business data information from their local area for quarterly reporting.

#### **F. Evaluation**

The Business Services Coordinator will provide oversight and reporting for the following metrics:

- A shared vision and strategy for business services signed by all active partners
- A unified approach and message that is focused on the workforce system holistically as opposed to a program specific approach
- An outreach plan based on sector strategies identified in the local plan
- Identification of locally available resources, including channels for outreach and how they will be used
- The role of each partner in performing outreach activities
- A method for determining the effectiveness of local outreach efforts
- A description of additional partnerships to assist in communications and outreach to include business roundtables, business advisory councils, or existing business visitation programs through economic development activities
- The development of a procedure for business services referrals
- The website must include a standard point of contact protocol with updated contact information for businesses and provide a list of available business services within the local workforce area.

#### IV. References

- United States Department of Labor, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Final Rule, 20 CFR 678.435
- Arkansas Workforce Delivery System Vision
- Northwest Arkansas Workforce Development Area Regional and Local Plan

  
John Dyess, Chair

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Date