



The Feasibility Study: An Exploration of Wisconsin's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Program

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- Any views expressed here are ours alone and not necessarily those of the sponsoring institution

What were the Study's Goals?

- Understand implementation of WIOA in Wisconsin
 - Understand American Job Center processes and day-to-day work
 - Identify ongoing accomplishments
 - Identify opportunities for improvement
 - Understand funding practices, opportunities to maximize efficiency
 - Identify models, lessons learned from other states
 - Who we listened to-Directors, AJC staff, partners, employers, clients

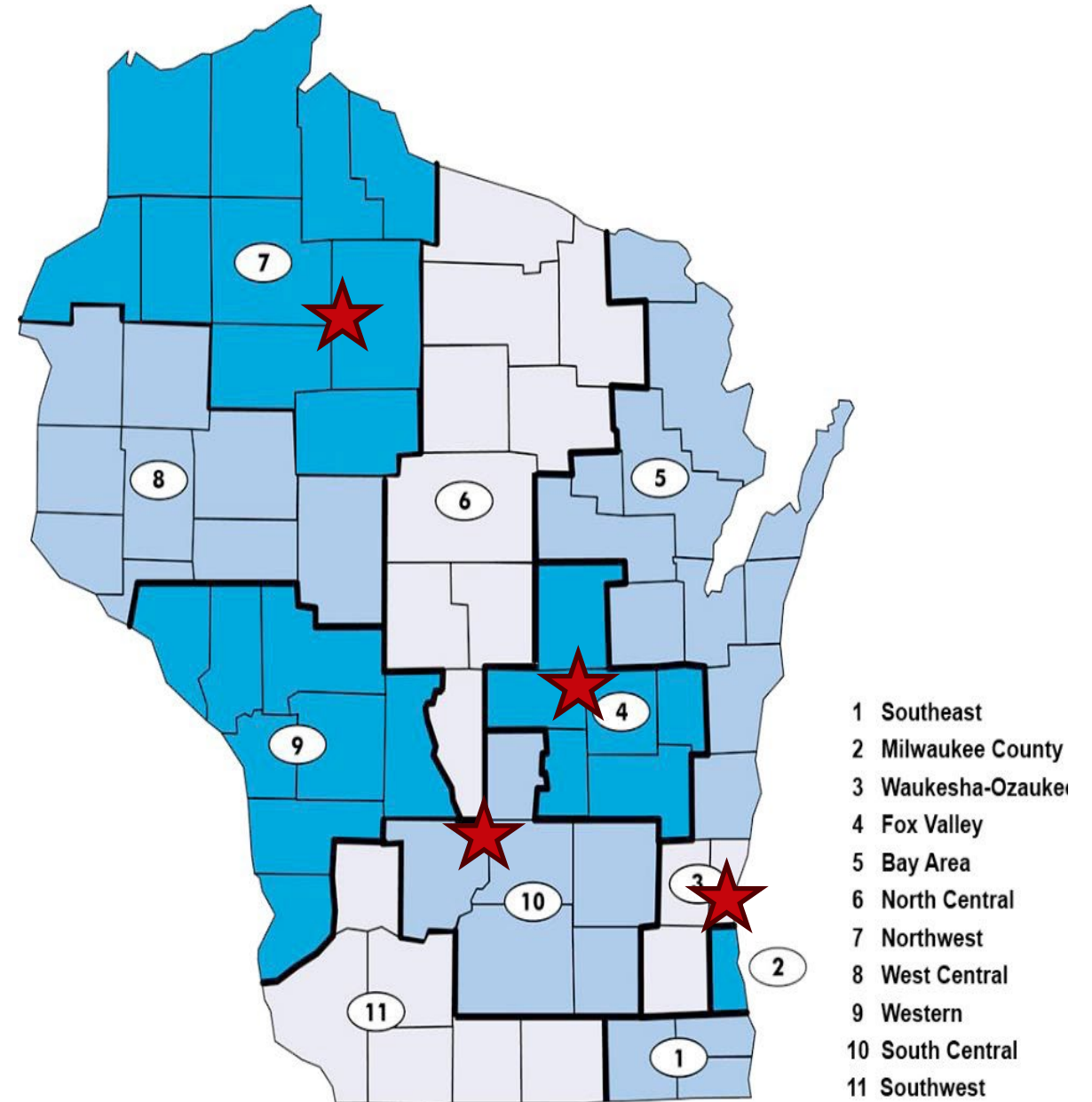
Study Methods & Sample

Methods

- Literature review
- Funding analysis
- Observations of AJCs
- Stakeholder Interviews

Sample (N = 63)

- Directors/Operators (n=11)
- Direct service staff (n=17)
- Employers (n=6)
- Clients (n = 29)



WIOA System Strengths

- Dedicated staff and effective case management at the individual level
- Development of creative solutions to challenges and eager to try innovative, new practices
- Technology has improved reach of WIOA and made access to services more convenient for some populations

Strengths

Staff go the extra mile

“If a client’s homeless, we’ll meet them at McDonald’s or the library, whatever it takes”-
Staff Member

Tech extends reach (for some)

“I work during the day, so I used online workshops at night. It made a big difference because I couldn’t get time off”-Client

Employer Relationships

“Our rep checks in with us every few weeks, even if we don’t have an opening. It keeps us connected and makes it easy to reach out when we do need help”-Employer Partner

Strengths II

Collaboration Works

“When we all sit down together—Title I, DVR, Job Service, it actually works...” — Staff member

Relationships

“Our business services rep calls just to check in, not only when there’s an opening. That kind of relationship makes us want to keep working with the Job Center” — Employer

Expanded Access

“The online workshops helped a lot. I could do them at night after my kids were asleep.” — Client

WIOA System Challenges

WIOA System Challenges

- Struggles with siloed service delivery, lack of service coordination, and realizing true “one-stop” vision of WIOA
- Differential reporting requirements, funding streams, and disjointed and duplicative data collection
- Some performance metrics seemed misaligned with local context and special population needs
- Variation within and across one-stop centers leads to inconsistent and inequitable service provision, outcomes
- Struggles to serve some populations with special needs

One-Stop ≠ One System for some

“Each partner has their own system, their own data entry, and their own reporting requirements. We’re supposed to be one system, but it doesn’t feel that way.”

— Direct Service Staff Member

Metrics Trade-offs

“Paperwork is so cumbersome—probably 50/50 of what we do. Sometimes it feels like we spend more time meeting performance measures than meeting clients’ needs.” — Staff member

“If we want to meet our metrics, we have to be selective. We’re pushed to prioritize people we can get placed quickly. But those aren’t always the ones who need us most.”—Director

“Our clients can’t keep a job if they’re bouncing from couch to couch, or if they’re struggling with trauma and can’t access therapy. But none of that counts toward our [WIOA] outcomes.”—Director

WIOA External System Threats

- Reduced federal funding, increased reliance on supplemental, competitive funding
- Underlying barriers to employment difficult for Job Centers to address without adequate community resources

Threats

“Funding keeps going down, but expectations keep going up. We’re doing more with less every single year.” – Director

“Our clients can’t keep a job if they’re bouncing from couch to couch, or if they’re struggling with trauma and can’t access therapy. But none of that counts toward our [WIOA] outcomes.” – Director

“I wish there were more resources out there. And I know they’re out there. It’s knowing where to tell people to go...They’ll be working here a couple of months and then they lose their childcare and they just stop showing up” --Employer

System Opportunities

- Mostly centralized, state-level approach; effective partnerships at local level
- Opportunities to improve cross-program enrollment, leverage blended and braided funding opportunities
- Opportunities to better coordinate intake, data collection, and information sharing across programs
- WI can leverage individual staff-level knowledge, commitment, and innovation to shape and strengthen the goal of delivering a true integrated set of WIOA services

Enhancing Communication

Client navigation & communication

“Clients shouldn’t have to tell their story three different times. If we could share basic information across programs, it would make things easier for everyone.” — Staff member

Employer relationships & follow through

“Employers need to know who to call. When they don’t get a call back, they move on. Consistency matters.” — Employer Partner

Collaborative problem-solving

“When workforce and partner staff actually talk to each other about a case, the client moves forward faster.” — Director

Data & Resource Alignments

Data systems do not
'talk' to each other

"We have to enter the same information into three different systems that don't talk to each other. It wastes staff time and increases errors." — Staff member

Funding silos &
restrictions

"Funding silos make it hard ... One grant pays for training, another for case management, but clients need both." — Director

Performance
reporting burdens

"We spend so much time trying to meet reporting requirements that it takes away from helping people." — Staff member

Implications for Policy & Practice: Service Provision-Clients

- Develop platform for clients to access and manage their WIOA system info, which can be shared w/staff
- Develop integrated intake and data sharing system
- Establish peer groups (“Job Club,” networking)
- Collaborate with community service providers to address underlying barriers
- Align staff schedules to maximize effectiveness of hybrid work
- Provide cross-training for Job Center staff, partner agencies
- Revise Job Center website with client input

Implications for Policy & Practice: Service Provision-Employers

- Offer brief video orientations to job center services
- Produce “one-pagers” regarding services, including non-employment services
- Diversify employment pools, including recruiters for laborers, frontline service workers, non-entry level jobs
- Include a more diverse set of employers at job fairs targeted to clientele (both entry and non-entry level)

Implications for Policy & Practice: Communication, Data Collection, and Data Sharing

- Align data systems across agencies and share data; also consider needs of independent service providers
- Consider information sharing opportunities:
 - Director Roundtables
 - Regional partner roundtables
 - Integrated training
- Develop brochures, short videos about WIOA services for different stakeholder audiences

Implications for Policy & Practice: Serving Distinct Populations

- Develop and test (pilot) revised benchmarks that better address success for certain populations
- Allow more flexible use of funds to provide wraparound services
- Increase training opportunities to promote computer literacy, technology skills
- For populations with higher barriers to employment:
 - Establish clear goals
 - Facilitate inter-agency, program coordination
 - Identify co-enrollment opportunities

Limitations & Suggestions for Future Research

- Lack of rigorous causal evidence
- Findings from interviews cannot be generalized to the full population of WIOA staff, employers, and clients
- Further limitations due to the sample of four focal areas
- Future research:
 - Analyses of quantitative data
 - Embedded research
 - Evaluation of policy or practice changes stemming from this study

What resonated? What did we miss?

Thank You & Contact information

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