The One-Stop System in Virginia
Local Workforce Investment Areas: An Assessment

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**Acknowledgments**

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Executive Summary

One-Stop Career Centers represent the cornerstone of the local workforce delivery system. In the Commonwealth of Virginia, they operate under the guidance of the Virginia Workforce Council (VWC) and Local Workforce Investment Boards in sixteen Local Workforce Investment Areas (LWIAs). Each LWIA is required by statute to have at least one comprehensive full-service One-Stop Career Center where customers are provided core services, including information and access to a wide array of workforce programs.

In June 2005, the VWC voted to set funds aside for an objective, professional third-party assessment of the LWIAs in order to better understand factors contributing to variations in local operations and efforts to create an integrated and seamless service delivery system for job seekers and employer customers. The Urban Institute and Capital Research Corporation conducted this study under a contract with the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC), acting as an agent for the VWC. The overarching goal of the study is to describe and assess the major trends, patterns, and differences across local One-Stop Centers at this juncture in the Commonwealth’s continued efforts to build a demand-driven, high performance workforce development system and to provide information that will be useful for the State Council in making decisions that would improve WIA activities and operations throughout the service system. Separate reports on each of the 16 LWIAs were also prepared and are included in Appendix B.

This study presents information and findings based primarily on one-day site visits conducted between May and October 2006 to one full-service comprehensive One-Stop Center in each LWIA that has been certified by the state. Over half of the 16 areas have more than one certified comprehensive One-Stop Center. In LWIAs with more than one certified comprehensive One-Stop Center, we conducted the site visit at the Center in each WIA region that serves the largest number of WIA enrolled customers on an annual basis (see Exhibit 1). Each of the 16 site visits typically included interviews with LWIB directors and One-Stop Center managers and staff responsible for overall administration/operations, core services, WIA intensive services and training, business outreach and job development. Information obtained from interviews conducted during the site visits was supplemented by readily
available documentation and data (e.g., the Strategic Plan). The assessment is also informed by a variety of research studies on WIA implementation and service integration literature.

**Study Context: Virginia Workforce Development System Building**

As most recently articulated in Governor Kaine’s Strategic Plan for Workforce Development, Virginia’s system-building efforts are driven by a vision for a “world class workforce development system that meets the needs of workers and employers throughout the state.” Over the past several years, key dimensions of this vision have included: building a demand-driven workforce system; engaging and serving employers; providing universal access to services; building stronger relationships and alignment with economic development; providing training in high demand occupations and areas that offer opportunities for high wages and career advancement; developing an integrated, seamless service delivery system; and achieving the integration of various programs within the workforce system.

To date, the State has taken many steps to build such a system while also allowing LWIBs discretion to design and tailor their One-Stop workforce development system to the unique needs, environment, and characteristics of each locality. For example:

- **State Partner Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).** While not required by Federal law, Virginia developed and executed a State Partner MOU in 2003 between required WIA state partners (i.e., Department of Commerce and Trade, Department of Education, and Department of Health and Human Services). The purpose of this document is to set forth the relative responsibilities of the partners, at both the state and local levels, related to planning and implementation of the workforce investment system.

- **State Certification of One-Stop Centers.** To create more uniformity and improve One-Stop Center performance, the State instituted a minimum standards certification process for comprehensive One-Stop Centers in 2004. In order to receive certification, each LWIA must have one fully certified One-Stop Center, a state-approved strategic plan (that must be updated every three years), a state-approved operational plan with measurable goals, an annual business plan (also known as a “demand plan”) to identify jobs and skills needed by employers, and board member certification.

- **Front-Line Staff Certification.** To increase system effectiveness and achieve a consistent and credible level of quality service in every One-Stop Center regardless of region or service providers, the VWC approved the development of a front-line staff certification process in 2005. At least one
certified comprehensive One-Stop Center in each LWIA was required have received a “Tier 2 certification” by July 1, 2006.

- **System-Wide Accountability Measures.** The VWC addressed deficiencies in the accountability system in 2005 through the adoption of eight system-wide measures that apply to the following programs: WIA Title 1-B; Secondary and Postsecondary Career and Technical Education; Wagner-Peyser; Adult Education and Literacy; Vocational Rehabilitation; TANF; and Apprenticeship.

State policy developments in the past two years have created new opportunities for Virginia to move closer to realizing its goal of streamlining and integrating workforce policy and services for business, workers, and job seekers. In 2006, the General Assembly enacted into law a new Chief Workforce Development Officer position that is held by the Governor who, in turn, may delegate that responsibility to a senior person on his immediate staff. The Senior Advisor for Workforce is responsible for the coordination of workforce development across Secretariats to ensure that the Commonwealth’s workforce development efforts are implemented in a coordinated and efficient manner and has recently issued a statewide strategic plan to address the need for reforms in workforce policy, including the implementation of workforce development and training initiatives. At the federal level, it is anticipated that WIA reauthorization will involve significant policy and program changes that will affect the One-Stop Career Center system.

**System Assessment Findings and Issues for Consideration**

Systems-building is an ongoing process rather than a one-time event and system-building efforts typically fall along a continuum that range from very basic coordination of services (e.g., sharing program information, making informal referrals) to full system integration (e.g., co-location, unified budgeting, common performance measures and accountability, blended funding) where programmatic boundaries and funding silos are, if not completely eliminated, at least largely transcended. In Virginia, One-Stop system building efforts at the local level to achieve a less fragmented and more integrated, responsive, and efficient service delivery system fall along different points along this continuum.

Most One-Stop Centers have achieved a coordinated service approach for the delivery of basic core services and WIA program services. The One-Stop Centers generally have a streamlined intake process for self-directed and staff-assisted core
program services available at the One-Stop Center. Staff involved in or responsible for administering these core services (e.g., initial intake and orientation, staffing the resource rooms) and for providing WIA intensive and training program services are either cross-trained or organized into functional teams. Although the particulars of the physical layout are different, all the One-Stop Centers visited met the objective of being customer-friendly and conducive to conducting a self-directed job search. Staff are generally very accessible and there are processes in place to help customers conduct self-directed job searches as well as identify and serve job seekers that might need intensive services or training. LWIBs and the One-Stop Centers have also generally undertaken a variety of efforts to engage employers, identify demand industries and create an effective bridge between job seekers and employers.

These successes notwithstanding, the broader goal of bringing together diverse partners, services, and resources together under the One-Stop system has yet to be achieved on a widespread basis. Although there are exceptions, the level of full-time co-location involving multiple mandatory partners is generally low across the 16 LWIAs and service coordination between the One-Stop and mandatory (and optional) partners is less evident in areas where there is limited or no on-site partner presence.

In many areas, the relatively minimal involvement of a wide range of partners in many LWIAs perpetuates fragmentation and duplication of services, limits the overall capacity, and reduces the ability of local One-Stop system to serve customers with special needs or multiple barriers to employment. To the extent that partners are involved, this involvement provides much needed services. However, with the general exception of Wagner-Peyser, the partnerships do not include financial support to help support the infrastructure costs of One-Stop operations even though this is required under WIA. For rural areas with large service areas, service capacity and access issues are compounded and complicated by logistical difficulties for co-location and scarcity of partner resources regardless of the feasibility of co-location.

In the area of training, there was ample evidence that LWIBs have made great strides in local demand-planning by using labor market data on projected industry-based business needs, but far less progress had been made in linking that
knowledge base to the development of employer-based training strategies either in the form of customized incumbent training initiatives and/or functioning as an intermediary in industry-based or sectoral training programs that involve multiple employers - two promising strategies for increasing wages of workers and addressing the needs of employers (Martinson and Holcomb 2007). And finally, regardless of the geographic size of the Local Workforce Investment Area or organizational structure of the One-Stop Center, local WIB staff and One-Stop Center staff were in agreement that the challenges associated with employer engagement in the workforce development system are quite significant and that more progress could be made if additional staff time and resources could be dedicated to engaging and involving the employer community.

In response to the challenges and successes that the local LWIBs have experienced in serving job seekers and employers through the current One-Stop system, five strategies for moving system-building efforts forward are offered here for consideration, some of which may already be underway.

- **Consider ways to expand funding and capacity for the One-Stop System.** To help increase partner involvement in and contributions to the One-Stop system, the following state-level activities and actions could be considered:
  - Increase partner involvement through state-level actions such as: (1) mandating a percentage of the partner’s funding allocation for One-Stop infrastructure; (2) bringing together state-level agencies with administrative authority over the key mandatory partner programs to reconsider how the existing state partner MOU agreement could be revised and expanded to send a clearer message that local partner participation in the One-Stop system includes co-location (perhaps making this a “requirement” with an opt-out waiver option that could be granted at the LWIB level only if certain criteria were met); and (3) undertaking a cross-agency collaborative review of program rules and regulations to identify where existing programmatic and fiscal requirements impede coordination and take steps, where possible, to remove such barriers as well as identify new ways that existing funding streams and programs could be streamlined. To the extent this process is already underway, it will be important to systematically gain local partner program input into this state-level review to help understand identify the local-level viewpoints on the practical implementation of these policies and insights into what types of existing barriers would require policy or regulatory change versus policy clarification.

- Provide funding for local “capacity building for underserved special population” (e.g., homeless, TANF, ex-offender, limited English speakers etc.) initiatives for which local LWIBs could apply. Funding would be
contingent upon the LWIBs ability to demonstrate that the proposed initiative has a strong systems- and capacity-building element, leverages funding, and requires significant involvement by one or two partners that are currently relatively disengaged from the One-Stop system.

- Provide technical assistance to LWIBs interested in applying for grants and consider hiring grant writers (either directly, or in partnership with other entities) to help identify grant opportunities, write proposals, including those that might require regional or multi-jurisdictional collaboration across different LWIAs. Several local areas visited for this study were aggressively looking to expand their funding sources by seeking out federal, state, and foundation grants. A few LWIBs, for example, had grant writers on staff or were considering contracting for part-time or consulting grant-writing assistance. Given that the success of raising funds through grants is not predictable, investing resources into hiring someone with this kind of expertise may not be a viable option for all local workforce areas.

- Provide additional technical assistance to the WIBs in developing and expanding incumbent worker training initiatives and sector-based strategies. The degree to which LWIAs have developed or utilized training options under WIA that serve not only to increase worker skills and wages but also as serve effective mechanisms for increasing employer interest, engagement and confidence in the One-Stop system – namely, OJT, customized training for new and incumbent workers, and employer-based sectoral training strategies – is generally infrequent. That is, the increased flexibility afforded under the waiver approved by DOL (aimed at expanding incumbent worker training) has, as yet, resulted in little expansion of incumbent training initiatives at the local level. As part of this effort, local LWIBs could be encouraged to take advantage of this waiver and further explore opportunities for greater coordination employers and with the Department of Business Assistance (a logical partnership for efforts to expand incumbent worker training).

- Reduce duplication and better streamline services by encouraging closer coordination between Wagner-Peyser and One-Stop core and employer services in One-Stop Centers that are not operated (or run out of) the VEC. The VEC serves as the One-Stop operator in slightly less than half the certified comprehensive One-Stop Centers in the state. These VEC-operated One-Stop Centers have the advantage of VEC administrators overseeing both Wagner-Peyser and WIA services and this facilitates efforts to coordinate between programs to reduce overlap. However, in the remaining One-Stop Centers, there are varying levels of Wagner-Peyser on-site presence. In light of the tight funding situation faced by LWIAs and One-Stop Centers – there is both motivation and potential to avoid or minimize duplication of services and inefficient use of resources through greater involvement of Wagner-Peyser in One-Stops not operated by the VEC. The State and LWIAs may want to look for more opportunities to establish closer collaboration and a greater streamlined presence between VEC staff responsible for Wagner-Peyser services and One-Stop staff responsible for carrying out similar duties as well as WIA program staff. In addition to the possible cost savings by
streamlining duplicative services, more coordination between these overlapping services could potentially improve employers’ understanding of the workforce system as a whole, reduce confusion over how and where to access various kinds of business assistance, and reduce the potential for employer disenchantment or frustration over being approached by too many employment-related programs.

- Increase or redirect resources to LWIAs, perhaps through improved efforts to leverage funding through partner programs, for the purpose of increasing staff that can be dedicated to engaging employers and piloting a coordinated employer outreach strategy. To the extent that LWIBs are able to obtain funding to support business outreach, as a few LWIAs have done, it appeared that the One-Stop Centers derive a greater benefit if those WIB-level staff activities are coordinated with local One-Stop efforts to carry out business service activities. The state may also want to consider ways to encourage LWIAs to conduct a more coordinated area-wide employer outreach strategy that involves, for example, a larger range of partners to conduct presentations to employers or the creation of a data base to track employer contacts across local partners. From a broader system perspective, this would help address the lack of coordination (and attendant duplication of effort) in the delivery of business services among One-Stop partners, particularly in the LIWAs with One-Stop Centers that are not operated by the VEC or located in VEC field offices.

- Enhance local-level opportunities for sharing information on innovative and best practices. In addition to setting aside some time at regular meetings of the WIB Director’s Association to share best practices, the State could provide opportunities for One-Stop Managers to meet (e.g., bi-annual statewide meetings/conferences) to discuss ways to improve One-Stop operations and services, and share information about promising practices. This would provide a venue for those most “nuts and bolts” knowledge about One-Stop operations have a chance to share ideas and experiences in a way that could supplement the regular communications between LWIB administrators. The state could also consider creating an “internal best practices and troubleshooter” website for LWIB and all One-Stop staff to post information about best practices on an ongoing basis as well as create an electronic forum to exchange questions and tips. Locally developed marketing materials could also be scanned and kept in a linked clearinghouse so that others could see alternative formats and potentially improve their own marketing materials in a more cost-efficient manner.
I. Introduction

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) is the nation’s primary legislation authorizing the public workforce investment system. WIA became effective in all states, including the Commonwealth of Virginia, on July 1, 2000. WIA, which replaced the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), is based on seven guiding principles:

- **Streamlined services.** WIA mandates the establishment of a One-Stop service delivery system, by which multiple employment and training programs come together to plan and coordinate services at the "street level." This was intended to reduce service fragmentation and simplify and expand access to services for job seekers and employers. Partnerships serve as the primary mechanism for building this seamless system of service delivery for job seekers and customers. The WIA legislation requires seventeen programs, termed “mandatory partners”, to participate in and share in the costs of supporting this system. In addition, states may designate other optional partners as mandatory partners and localities may work out partnership arrangements with any service providers.¹

- **Individual empowerment.** Individuals are empowered to obtain the services and skills they need to enhance their employment opportunities. This empowerment is accomplished through Individual Training Accounts (ITAs), which are voucher-like mechanisms that enable eligible participants to choose the approved training provider that best meets their needs. The development of "consumer reports" containing information for each training provider allows individuals to make informed training choices.

¹ Virginia designated the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families-Virginia Initiative for Employment not Welfare (TANF-VIEW) program and the Food Stamp Employment and Training (FS-ET) program as mandatory partners in 2003. The other mandatory partners are: WIA Adult Program; WIA Dislocated Worker Program; WIA Youth Program; Employment Service; Trade Adjustment Assistance Program; Employment and Training for Veterans; Post-Secondary Career and Technical Education; Adult Education and Family Literacy Program; Vocational Rehabilitation Services; Senior Community Service Employment Program; Unemployment Insurance; Community Service Block Grants; Job Corps; Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Employment and Training Services; and Native American Employment and Training Program.
• **Universal access.** Through the One-Stop system, every individual has access to basic “core” employment-related services. Customers can obtain job search assistance as well as labor market information about job vacancies, the skills needed for in-demand occupations, wages paid, and other relevant employment trends in the local, regional, and national economy.

• **Increased accountability.** States, localities, and training providers are held accountable for their performance.

• **Strengthened private sector role.** WIA endeavors to engage the business community as a customer of the workforce system and in strategic planning, through representation on Local Workforce Investment Boards (LWIBs).

• **Enhanced state and local flexibility.** States and localities have flexibility to build on existing reforms in order to implement innovative and comprehensive workforce investment systems. Through such mechanisms as unified planning and waivers, states and their local partners have the flexibility to tailor delivery systems to meet the particular needs of individual communities.

• **Improved youth programs.** Youth programs are linked more closely to local labor market needs and the community as a whole, and provide a strong connection between academic and occupational learning. In addition, traditional employment and training services are to be augmented by an array of youth development activities.

In Virginia, the Virginia Workforce Council (VWC) provides strategic leadership to the State regarding the workforce development system and its efforts to create a strong workforce aligned with employer needs. The VWC is also charged with serving as the State Board required under the federal WIA, setting policy and standards for the Local Workforce Investment Boards (LWIBs) and One-Stop Centers, and recommending specific uses for the WIA statewide discretionary funds.

One-Stop Career Centers (also known as Virginia Workforce Centers) represent the cornerstone of the local workforce delivery system. In the Commonwealth of Virginia, they operate under the guidance of the VWC and LWIBs in sixteen Local Workforce Investment Areas (LWIA). Each LWIA is required by statute to have at least one comprehensive full-service One-Stop Career Center where customers are provided core services, including information and access to a
wide array of workforce programs. Each mandatory partner is required to contribute “a fair share” in the costs of developing and supporting the One-Stop system, including providing core services as long as doing so is not inconsistent with the Federal law authorizing the partner’s program. As of July 2006, there were 33 comprehensive full-service One-Stop Centers that had received state-level certification.

In June 2005, the VWC voted to set funds aside for an objective, professional third-party assessment of the LWIAs in order to better understand factors contributing to variations in local operations and efforts to create an integrated and seamless service delivery system for job seekers and employer customers. The Urban Institute and Capital Research Corporation conducted this study under a contract with the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC), acting as an agent for the VWC. The overarching goal of the study is to provide information that will be useful for LWIBs and the State Council in making decisions that would improve WIA activities and operations throughout the service system.

II. Study Context: Virginia Workforce Development System Building

As most recently articulated in Governor Kaine’s Strategic Plan for Workforce Development, Virginia’s system-building efforts are driven by a vision for a “world class workforce development system that meets the needs of workers and employers throughout the state.” Over the past several years, key dimensions of this vision have included: building a demand-driven workforce system; engaging and serving employers; providing universal access to services; building stronger relationships and alignment with economic development; providing training in high demand occupations and areas that offer opportunities for high wages and career advancement; developing an integrated, seamless service delivery system; and achieving the integration of various programs within the workforce system.

To date, the State has taken many steps to build such a system while also allowing LWIBs discretion to design and tailor their One-Stop workforce development system to the unique needs, environment, and characteristics of each locality. For example:

- **State Partner Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).** While not required by Federal law, Virginia developed and executed a State Partner
MOU in 2003 between required WIA state partners (i.e., Department of Commerce and Trade, Department of Education, and Department of Health and Human Services). The purpose of this document is to set forth the relative responsibilities of the partners, at both the state and local levels, related to planning and implementation of the workforce investment system, including an agreement to enforce the aspects of the MOU at the local level and/or encourage local representatives to enter into this agreement locally. System governance guidance was also provided to local workforce development areas on developing local MOUs, including but not limited to providing a sample MOU template and general guidance on various methods of cost allocation.

The State MOU language is generally broad but still detailed enough to make clear that a commitment to Virginia’s vision of a seamless workforce investment system is one in which co-location is the preferred method of One-Stop service delivery, partner programs are to contribute financially to support the costs of the One-Stop system, and that strategies intended to promote the realization of such a system (e.g., common case management, unified budget) are geared toward achieving full service integration.

- **State Certification of One-Stop Centers.** To create more uniformity and improve One-Stop Center performance, the State instituted a minimum standards certification process for comprehensive One-Stop Centers in 2004. In order to receive certification, each LWIA must have one fully certified One-Stop Center, a state-approved strategic plan (that must be updated every three years), a state-approved operational plan with measurable goals, an annual business plan (also known as a “demand plan”) to identify jobs and skills needed by employers, and board member certification.

- **Front-Line Staff Certification.** To increase system effectiveness and achieve a consistent and credible level of quality service in every One-Stop Center regardless of region or service providers, the VWC approved the development of a front-line staff certification process in 2005. At least one certified comprehensive One-Stop Center in each LWIA was required have received a “Tier 2 certification” by July 1, 2006.
• **System-Wide Accountability Measures.** The VWC addressed deficiencies in the accountability system in 2005 through the adoption of eight system-wide measures that apply to the following programs: WIA Title 1-B; Secondary and Postsecondary Career and Technical Education; Wagner-Peyser; Adult Education and Literacy; Vocational Rehabilitation; TANF; and Apprenticeship.

State policy developments in the past two years, as well as ongoing progress on several key fronts initiated earlier under Governor Warner’s administration, have created new opportunities for Virginia to move closer to realizing its goal of streamlining and integrating workforce policy and services for business, workers, and job seekers. In 2006, the General Assembly enacted into law a new Chief Workforce Development Officer position that is held by the Governor who, in turn, may delegate that responsibility to a senior person on his immediate staff. The Senior Advisor for Workforce, who acts on behalf of the Governor, is responsible for the coordination of workforce development across Secretariats to ensure that the Commonwealth’s workforce development efforts are implemented in a coordinated and efficient manner.

The new Special Advisor is charged to develop a statewide strategic plan to address the need for reforms in workforce policy, including the implementation of workforce development and training initiatives. The General Assembly’s renewed focus and action in this area emerged from recommendations made by a joint subcommittee that was formed to study the need for greater consolidation or coordination of workforce development and training resources. This subcommittee reconsidered the 2002 Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) report recommendation to create a new state agency for workforce training and development as an administrative strategy to eliminate fragmentation, duplication, and complexity arising from the current system of multiple workforce and training programs spanning nine agencies in three Secretariats.

At the federal level, WIA legislation was originally authorized through late 2003. Congress could not reach agreement over proposed changes to WIA during the reauthorization process, and as a result the original WIA legislation was extended through continuing resolutions. Although the exact timing or outcome of WIA reauthorization cannot be foretold, it is anticipated that WIA reauthorization will
involve significant policy and program changes that will affect the One-Stop Career Center system.\(^2\)

**III. Study Approach and Limitations**

This study presents information and findings based primarily on one-day site visits to one full-service comprehensive One-Stop Center in each LWIA that has been certified by the state. Over half of the 16 areas have more than one certified comprehensive One-Stop Center. In LWIAs with more than one certified comprehensive One-Stop Center, we conducted the site visit at the Center in each WIA region that serves the largest number of WIA enrolled customers on an annual basis (see Exhibit 1). Information obtained from interviews conducted during the site visits was supplemented by readily available documentation and data (e.g., documents related to the Strategic Plan, LWIA activities, and budget allocations) supplied directly by the LWIBs or accessed from their websites. The assessment provided here is also informed by a variety of research studies on WIA implementation and the service integration literature.

The study site visits took place between May and October 2006 and were conducted by a small team of researchers from The Urban Institute and Capital Research Corporation. Serving as an objective third-party research study team, the goal was not to conduct an audit to ascertain compliance with existing policies but rather to describe and assess the major trends, patterns, and differences across local One-Stop Centers at this juncture in the Commonwealth’s continued efforts to build a demand-driven, high performance workforce development system. The assessment and this report is primarily based on qualitative analysis, documenting the types of One-Stop centers that operate across the state and summarizing key strengths and challenges that LWIB and One-Stop Center staff discussed, and raising implications of these findings for consideration by policymakers.

Each of the 16 site visits typically included interviews with LWIB directors and One-Stop Center managers and staff responsible for overall administration/operations, core services, WIA intensive services and training, business outreach and

\(^2\) The Department of Labor recently issued a proposed rule that would allow training or other needed services to be provided in the order and mix that seems most appropriate for the individual (FR 20 CFR Part 662, December 20, 2006).
job development. The number of interviews conducted varied depending on how the One-Stop Centers visited in each LWIA were structured and staffed. In all, we met with 127 individuals that staff the LWIBs or are directly involved with local-level One-Stop operations. Most of the interviews were conducted on a one-on-one basis or with small groups; a few were conducted by telephone when an in-person interview was not possible due to scheduling difficulties. Interviews ranged from thirty minutes to two hours, and averaged a little more than one hour.

Exhibit 1: Certified One-Stop Centers Visited in Each LWIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LWIA</th>
<th>LWIA Name</th>
<th>Certified Virginia Workforce Center Visited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Southwest Virginia</td>
<td>Norton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>New River / Mt. Rogers</td>
<td>Radford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Western Virginia</td>
<td>Roanoke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>Shenandoah Valley</td>
<td>Harrisonburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Piedmont</td>
<td>Charlottesville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Region 2000</td>
<td>Lynchburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>South Central</td>
<td>South Boston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Capital Area</td>
<td>Henrico (County)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>Richmond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Northern Virginia</td>
<td>Falls Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Alexandria / Arlington</td>
<td>Alexandria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Bay Consortium</td>
<td>Warsaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Greater Peninsula</td>
<td>Hampton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Crater</td>
<td>Hopewell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Hampton Roads</td>
<td>Norfolk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>West Piedmont</td>
<td>Danville</td>
</tr>
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The interviews were semi-structured and designed to allow maximum flexibility to tailor the interview questions to the different perspectives of respondents and to capture the unique circumstances that prevail at each site, while still ensuring that all key topic areas of interest were addressed in each site visits. The semi-structured discussion guide focused on the following key topic areas: funding sources and resource issues, staffing and partner arrangements, program structure and key services (with particular emphasis on core, intensive and training
services, and employer services), customer flow, management and oversight, and implementation challenges.

There are several important caveats to consider when reading this report:

• **The study focuses on local-level One-Stop operations within the 16 LWIA*s and does not focus on state-level activities currently underway that are likely to have an impact on local One-Stop operations and performance; federal or state workforce stakeholders and state VEC staff were not interviewed for this study. Thus, there may be points raised in this report that accurately reflect what we were told by local-level respondents but are at odds with state-level perspectives on the same issues. We recognize that state-level and local-level perceptions may differ and do not attempt to identify or reconcile them in this study. Our hope is that the exercise of documenting widely shared local-local implementation experiences based on the perspectives of those responsible for carrying out different One-Stop functions can help inform state-level policymakers and program administrators.**

• **Our research agenda was very broad in scope with a general charge to explore all aspects of LWIB and One-Stop Center operations. While this broad sweeping charge has its merits (e.g., producing a statewide profile of the range of models operating) the combination of the study’s broad scope, limited resources, and desire to have a statewide snapshot meant that some issues that are currently of high priority interest at the state level are not captured here. The report does, however, provide insights into local variation on many of the key issues of interest that could provide the framework for more in-depth and targeted research in subsequent studies.**

• **While site visits provide a valuable and rich amount of “on-the-ground” information, field-based data collection is resource intense. Time and resource constraints limited the fieldwork to one-day site visits and this necessarily restricted the number of interviews that could be conducted and limited the range of respondents interviewed. The overall quality and breadth of this assessment would clearly have benefited from also speaking with LWIB members, a wide range of partner staff, and employers. We supplemented information obtained from interviews with a review of relevant documents such as recent WIB minutes, Strategic Plans, Action Plans, Business Plans,**


Community Profiles, and policy manuals. Some requested material was outdated or missing and/or the amount of information provided across similar documents (e.g., updated strategic plans) varied, which limited their value but, more generally, the documentation provided useful background context.

- Although the study examined each LWIA, the design tradeoff was between breadth and depth — whether to use limited study resources to obtain a statewide profile of operations by visiting all local areas, or to examine particular topics in more depth in a smaller sample of local areas. The design selected, in consultation with state officials, was to obtain a statewide profile that included all local areas. Similarly, the data collection and analysis focused primarily on a single certified comprehensive One-Stop Center selected in each LWIA. While we expect that many of the trends and patterns we found in one certified comprehensive One-Stop Center is shared by others in the same LWIA, we visited slightly less than half of all certified comprehensive One-Stop Centers in the state. In addition, because the site visits focused only on a sample of certified comprehensive centers, we are not able to address the role and utility of the satellite Centers and information systems that are designed to expand service capacity and access, especially in rural areas and for special populations that may be hard-to-serve. Future studies might focus on a smaller sample of purposively selected local areas, allowing researchers to delve more deeply into specific operational issues.

- The study was not designed to explore whether different organizational and service delivery arrangements or particular practices are associated with higher WIA performance measures or other possible performance indicators. Thus, it is a documentation of the systems and the various models and practices that exist across the state. The information could be used in future studies to more empirically analyze factors related to performance outcomes.

- Finally, because the study focused primarily on the One-Stop system and operations, we also focused primarily on services for adult and dislocated workers. Clearly, some services that are sometimes separately located, such as WIA youth services and labor exchange employment services, are also critical elements in the effort to build a strong and comprehensive workforce
development system and should be specifically included in future field-based assessments.

Despite these limitations, we were able to collect a wealth of useful information about successes and challenges experienced by the One-Stop system in the 16 LWIAs that can both inform the VWC as this body provides guidance on how best to move the state closer to achieving its vision for the workforce development system.

Structure of Report. The report is structured as follows. Section IV presents a summary of the findings based on all 16 site visits. These are organized according to the following key topic areas: structural organization of the local One-Stop system, including the role and involvement of partners; funding and resource issues; and One-Stop Center service delivery for job seekers and employers. Section V summarizes the overall strengths and weaknesses of the current One-Stop system and offers a variety of issue areas and actions the state might address as part of its ongoing effort improve the current workforce investment system in Virginia. Appendix A provides a selection of “best practices” implemented by various LWIAs. Appendix B contains 16 separate reports that summarize information about LWIB activities and One-Stop operations, challenges, and promising practices in each LWIA.

IV. One-Stop Service Delivery: Systems-Building at the Local Level

This section describes and assesses the structure of One-Stop Center system at the local-level, the role of partners within that structure, and efforts to streamline and coordinate services for customers, resource and cost-sharing issues that affect overall service capacity, and services to jobseekers and customers. While we offer many summary statements about these critical issues, we also recognize that the ability to make generalizations is complicated by the complex and varied local geographic, demographic, economic and political context in which this “system-building” effort is taking across the 16 LWIAs.
Overview of the Structure of the One-Stop Delivery System in Virginia

The 16 LWIAs in Virginia are marked by varying levels of population density, differing geographic and spatial boundaries, and diversity in labor market and economic conditions (see Exhibit 2). These contextual factors affect the design and operation of local workforce systems and give rise to different sets of challenges at the local level for realizing the vision of unified workforce development system in Virginia. All but one of the local areas (LWIA 10 – Richmond) covers multiple jurisdictions with total populations from just under 200,000 (in LWIA 15 and LWIA 10) to 1-1.5 million (in LWIAs 11 and 16, respectively). Unemployment rates (as of September 2006) in these areas varied between 2.2 percent to 6.9 percent.

As of mid-2006, there were 36 full service One-Stop Centers operating in Virginia’s 16 LWIAs; 33 of these are certified by the State. The number of certified comprehensive One-Stop Centers within each LWIA ranged from one to five (see Exhibit 2): six LWIAs have a single certified comprehensive One-Stop Center, seven LWIAs have two certified comprehensive One-Stop Centers, two LWIAs have four certified One-Stop Centers and one has a total of five certified comprehensive One-Stop Centers (see Exhibit 1). The three full-service comprehensive One-Stop Centers that have not received state certification are located in LWIAs 3, 9, and 14. LWIBs have sought to increase service capacity and access through the use of satellite and information centers. There are currently 34 satellite centers, including one (in Winchester) that was slated to open soon after the study site visit, and 20 informational centers. All but one of the areas have at least one satellite center and about one-quarter have at least one information center.

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3 The three full-service comprehensive One-Stop Centers that have not received state certification are located in LWIAs 3, 9, and 14.
4 Satellite centers may be any entity that provides services as determined by the assessment of local needs by the LWIB (core services must be provided if any WIA funding contributes to a satellite center operations); informational centers provide information, electronic linkages, or referral to other centers in the system.
### Exhibit 2: Selected Characteristics of Local Workforce Investment Areas (LWIAs) (as of Fall 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LWIA</th>
<th>LWIA Name</th>
<th>Counties and Cities Served</th>
<th>LWIA Population (2000 Census)</th>
<th>Unemployment Rate (Sept. 2006)</th>
<th># of Comprehensive Certified One-Stop Centers</th>
<th># of Satellite and Information Centers (as of Dec. 2006)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Southwest Virginia</td>
<td>7 counties 1 city</td>
<td>209,300</td>
<td>4.7 %</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 satellite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>New River / Mt. Rogers</td>
<td>10 counties 3 cities</td>
<td>354,000</td>
<td>3.8 %</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4 satellite 2 information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Western Virginia</td>
<td>5 counties 1 city</td>
<td>312,000</td>
<td>3.3 %</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>Shenandoah Valley</td>
<td>10 counties 6 cities</td>
<td>444,000</td>
<td>LWIA 4 – 2.8 % LWIA 5 – 3.0 %</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4 satellite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Piedmont</td>
<td>10 counties 1 city</td>
<td>334,000</td>
<td>2.5 %</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3 satellite 6 information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Region 2000</td>
<td>4 counties 2 cities</td>
<td>233,900</td>
<td>3.1 %</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4 satellite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>South Central</td>
<td>10 counties</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>4.7 %</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8 information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Capital Area</td>
<td>7 counties*</td>
<td>668,000</td>
<td>2.9 %</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 satellite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>1 city</td>
<td>197,800</td>
<td>5.0 %</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 satellite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Northern Virginia</td>
<td>3 counties 4 cities</td>
<td>1,500,000</td>
<td>2.2 %</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5 satellite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Alexandria / Arlington</td>
<td>1 county 1 city</td>
<td>317,700</td>
<td>2.3 %</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 satellite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Bay Consortium</td>
<td>15 counties 1 city</td>
<td>390,700</td>
<td>2.7 %</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1 satellite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Greater Peninsula</td>
<td>3 counties 4 cities</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>4.1 %</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2 satellite 4 information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Crater</td>
<td>6 counties* 4 cities</td>
<td>167,100</td>
<td>4.5 %</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 satellite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Hampton Roads</td>
<td>2 counties 6 cities</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
<td>4.0 %</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2 satellite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>West Piedmont</td>
<td>3 counties 2 cities</td>
<td>202,900</td>
<td>6.9 %</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3 satellite</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* LWIB 15 has a MOU agreement with Chesterfield County, a jurisdiction of LWIA 9, to serve southern Chesterfield.

As part of its oversight responsibility for the WIA Title I funds for the workforce investment area, LWIBs are responsible for selecting an operator or operators for the One-Stop Centers in the area either through a competitive bidding process or by designating a consortium operator. As of mid-June 2006, about two-thirds of the LWIBs used a consortium arrangement that had one agency acting as the “lead” operator for One-Stop service delivery (see Exhibit 3). This represents an ongoing shift from consortium One-Stop operators to competitively determined One-
Stop operators within the state from the early years of WIA implementation when, according to a 2002 Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission of the Virginia General Assembly (JLARC) study, only three LWIAs used a competitive bidding process, while the remaining areas had established consortium operators.

Exhibit 3: Number and Type of Certified Comprehensive One-Stop Center Operators

Although the Culpepper Department of Human Services (DHS) is the operator of the Charlottesville One-Stop Center in LWIA 6, the Center is located in a VEC field office per an MOU agreement between the DHS and VEC.

In Virginia, the VEC is the lead consortium or sole One-Stop operator for 18 of the 33 certified full-service One-Stop Centers in the Commonwealth (see Exhibit 4). The remaining 15 certified One-Stop Centers are operated by a diverse range of organizational entities, including: two community colleges (in LWIAs 7 and 14), one private nonprofit organization (in LWIA 10), two private for-profit organizations (in LWIAs 13 and 16), five local governments (county government in LWIA 6, 8, 9 and 11, and joint city-county government in LWIA 12), and one community-based organization (in LWIA 17).

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5 The VEC is also the One-Stop operator of two non-certified full-service One-Stop Centers, one in LWIA 3 and the other in LWIA 9.

6 The organizational distribution of One-Stop operators for the One-Stop Centers in the study sample was similar but with a slightly higher proportion of VEC-operated One-Stop Centers than occurs across the state as a whole (55 percent versus 46 percent).
Exhibit 4. One-Stop Operator and WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker Service Providers by LWIA (as of Fall 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LWIA</th>
<th>One-Stop Operator Team</th>
<th>Lead One-Stop Center Operator(s)</th>
<th>WIA Adult &amp; Dislocated Worker (DW) Service Provider(s)</th>
<th>LWIA</th>
<th>One-Stop Center Operator</th>
<th>WIA Adult &amp; Dislocated Worker (DW) Service Provider(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>VEC</td>
<td>VEC</td>
<td>Adult: Goodwill DW: VEC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>VEC</td>
<td>Occupational Enterprises Incorporated (OEI) VEC ²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>VEC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>VEC</td>
<td>Adult: Goodwill DW: VEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Germanna Community College Lord Fairfax Community College VEC Regional Adult Education Culpeper County DHS Fauquier Career Resource Center Madison County DSS Rappahannock County DSS Culpeper DHS¹</td>
<td>Culpeper DHS ¹</td>
<td>Culpeper DHS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Central Virginia Community College (CVCC) Region 2000 Partnership</td>
<td>CVCC</td>
<td>CVCC</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Culpeper DHS</td>
<td>VEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>VEC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>VEC</td>
<td>VEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Capital Area Training Consortium (CATC) VEC Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) Senior Connections CATC VEC</td>
<td>CATC &amp; VEC</td>
<td>CATC &amp; VEC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Fairfax County Department of Family Services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>VEC Job Assistance Center⁴</td>
<td>VEC Job Assistance Center⁴</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Arlington County Board Mayor of Alexandria Alexandria DHS Arlington DHS</td>
<td>Alexandria DHS &amp; Arlington DHS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>VEC Job Assistance Center⁴</td>
<td>VEC Job Assistance Center⁴</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Thomas Nelson Community College (TNCC) VEC New Horizons Regional Education Center TNCC</td>
<td>TNCC</td>
<td>TNCC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>VEC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Arbor Employment and Training (AET) AET</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Pittsylvania County Community Action Agency (PCCA)</td>
<td></td>
<td>PCCA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ LWIA 6 appears in both One-Stop Operator categories (Consortium and Single/Multiple), since the area has a dual One-Stop operator structure: The One-Stop Center in Charlottesville is operated by the Culpeper Department of Human Services (DHS) and the One-Stop Center in Culpeper is operated by a consortium team, with the Culpeper DHS as the lead One-Stop Operator.
² In LWIA 1, Intensive services for both Adults and Dislocated Workers are provided by OEI and Training services are provided by the VEC.
³ In LWIA 8, 3 centers are operated by the VEC and one is operated by the Charlotte County Department of Social Services (DSS).
⁴ In LWIA 13, 3 centers are operated by the VEC and one is operated by the Job Assistance Center.
Local level structural arrangements for One-Stop service delivery continue to change and evolve over time. At the time that site visits for this study were conducted, five of the 16 LWIBs reported that they had made changes in the administration and operation of the One-Stop management and/or WIA program providers in the past two years. For example, in 2005, LWIB 6 replaced a consortium operating structure for one of its two certified One-Stop Centers to a competitively selected single agency. In 2006, LWIB 17 moved from three One-Stop operators to a single operator. It is also important to note that LWIAs 4 and 5 were merged into a single LWIA as of July 2006. These kinds of changes can lead to different partnering arrangements and service delivery practices.

**Partner Involvement in System-Building and Streamlining Services**

Partners are central to the WIA vision of a seamless system of services and their participation in the One-Stop system is required. Although there are over a dozen mandatory WIA program partners in Virginia that LWIBs are required to enter into MOU agreements (and, it appeared, had done so), the nature and degree of mandatory and optional partner involvement in the delivery of One-Stop services and overall system-building efforts vary considerably in practice. This is characteristic of One-Stop service system implementation found across the country. The specific partner mix, level of involvement, and type of partner services and activities within each LWIA is documented in greater detail in the area-specific narrative reports (see Appendix B).

A few of the One-Stop Centers that were visited local systems include a diverse set of mandatory and optional partnerships that are actively engaged, to varying degrees, these partners were integrated into overall One-Stop operations – these were the exception. Some One-Stop Centers have a large and diverse range of mandatory and optional partners co-located at the One-Stop Center, but almost all the partners are out-stationed at the Center once or twice a week. There is collaboration between partner agencies on behalf of common customers but the partners are still working within existing program “silos” or boundaries. Still others are small operations with limited full-time staff (e.g., five One-Stop Centers had less than 15 staff), which rely on a variety of partners to help assist with One-Stop operations. Alternatively, some of these smaller operations also have partnering
arrangements with just a few partners and these are the most challenged with respect to meeting the needs of customers and requirements of WIA.

LWIB One-Stop system building efforts are marked by the following general characteristics and patterns:

- The level of full-time co-location involving multiple mandatory partners is generally quite low across the 16 LWIAs (see Exhibit 5). While co-location does not automatically translate into higher levels of integrated service delivery, it is the State’s preferred primary method for achieving centralized and streamlined access to services and is generally viewed as a positive contributing factor to developing strong partnerships and integrated services. The greatest level of co-location and coordinated service delivery occurs between the One-Stop Center operator agency, which both oversees and is heavily involved in the delivery of core services, and the partner agency that administers WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker program services.7 As noted above, the same organizational entity generally fulfills both these functions – essentially providing an ad-hoc "consolidated" administrative structure to facilitate coordination across WIA’s tiered service model.

- To the extent full-time co-location of mandatory partner programs occurs within the study sample of One-Stop Centers, Wagner-Peyser and WIA are most commonly located together.8 This is the case in all LWIAs in which the VEC was the One-Stop operator and the WIA service provider.9 In these areas, other VEC-administered mandatory partner programs are also co-

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7 An organizational entity other than the lead One-Stop operator administers some or all of WIA Adult and/or Dislocated Worker services in the One-Stop Centers we visited in only a few areas (e.g., LWIAs 1, 2, 3).

8 In order for a One-Stop Center to receive state certification approval, the State Minimum Standards for One-Stop Center Certification requires, at a minimum, the following partner programs to be co-located and provide program information and referral, intake/registration, eligibility determination, and program enrollment: WIA Title I Adult and Dislocated Work program services, and the VEC-administered Employment Service, Veterans Employment Service, Trade Adjustment Assistance Reform Act (TAA) and Unemployment Insurance. In addition, co-location of Vocational Rehabilitation is required for the purpose of program information and referral and intake (but not eligibility determination and enrollment). All other program services need, at a minimum, only to be available through referral.

9 WIA intensive services in LWIA 1 are contracted out to a provider that is out-stationed at the One-Stop Center a few times per week. This provider also operates one of the satellite centers in the area and serves WIA intensive services clients at that location as well.
Exhibit 5: Co-location Status of Key Mandatory Partners in Certified One-Stop Centers Visited (as of Fall 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LWIA</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4/5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One-Stop Lead Operator</td>
<td>VEC</td>
<td>VEC</td>
<td>VEC</td>
<td>VEC</td>
<td>DHS</td>
<td>CVCC</td>
<td>VEC</td>
<td>CATC</td>
<td>TDC</td>
<td>DFS</td>
<td>DHS</td>
<td>VEC</td>
<td>TNCC</td>
<td>VEC</td>
<td>AET</td>
<td>PCCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operator of:</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>WIA Adult Intensive</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>O/EI</td>
<td>Goodwill</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>Goodwill</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
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<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WIA DW</td>
<td>○/●</td>
<td>O/EI/VEC</td>
<td>VEC</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>VEC</td>
<td>●</td>
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<td>Program/Partner:</td>
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<tr>
<td>VEC: ES-WP</td>
<td>●</td>
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<td>●</td>
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<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voc Rehab Service/DRS, Disability Navigator (DOL funded)</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
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<tr>
<td>DOE: Adult Basic and Literacy</td>
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<td>●</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCEP Program Provider (e.g., AARP)</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
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<tr>
<td>DSS: TANF-VIEW, FS-ET/DSS</td>
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● = Full-time 3-5 days per week  ○ = Part-time 1-3 days per week  M = Monthly presence  (P) = Planned presence

* In LWIA 14, the One-Stop Center and the VEC are located in separate offices within the same building; in LWIA 11, the One-Stop Center and the TANF/VIEW and Food Stamp programs are located in separate offices within the same building.
located in the One-Stop Center and available to customers. In areas where the VEC is not the One-Stop operator, there is a VEC staff person who provides basic Wagner-Peyser labor exchange services out-stationed at the Center (on a full or part-time basis) who can serve as a gateway to other VEC-administered programs.

- Not including Wagner-Peyser and WIA, the three partner programs most consistently involved in the One-Stop system that include an on-site presence at the certified comprehensive One-Stop Centers are: (1) Title V Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), (2) Adult Education and Basic Literacy, and (3) Vocational Rehabilitation. These mandatory program partners had a regularly scheduled presence at about half (although not necessarily the same) of the study One-Stop Centers (see Exhibit 5).

  o **Vocational Rehabilitation/Disability Navigators Partner Involvement.** The Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) outstations, on at least a weekly basis, a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and/or a DOL-funded Disability Navigator in eight of the certified One-Stops visited (not including the anticipated out-stationing of a new Disability Navigator position in another LWIA) to provide initial eligibility assessment for VR services. Other key contributions derived from the DRS partnership are accessibility assessments of the facility and assistive technology provided at no cost. Because the role that Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors can play in One-Stop Center operations is constrained by statute, those sites with Disability Navigators out-stationed at the One-Stop Centers had helped build system capacity to better identify and serve One-Stop customers with disabilities. A few sites noted joint grant projects that involved collaboration with DRS (e.g., the DOE-funded Projects with Industries grant in LWIA 16 and a DOL-funded Customized Employment Project grant in LWIA 10) had fostered greater collaboration and built system capacity to better serve individuals with disabilities.

  o **Adult Education and Literacy Partner Involvement.** Local adult education and literacy providers have a regularly scheduled on-site presence in nine local areas and offer a variety of services such as GED classes and testing, TABE assessments, ESL, and referrals to other adult education and literacy services in the community. Generally, the level of partner presence is part-time. Providing adult education services on-site increases service capacity, responds to local needs, and brings new customers into the One-Stop Center who otherwise would not necessarily have known about the full range of One-Stop services available. For example, in LWIA 17, an area with high unemployment and low education levels, providing adult education through the workforce system is a key piece of the area’s broader workforce strategy. One satellite center in this LWIA is
operated by the Adult Education Center and an adult education staff person is currently out-stationed on a weekly basis to the One-Stop Center. Expansion and remodeling efforts currently underway at the One-Stop Center will include room for a new classroom where adult education classes may be held.

- **SCSEP Partner Involvement.** SCSEP participants are used to help support core service activities by providing clerical support and other assistance in staffing Resource Rooms in One-Stop Centers in eight local areas. By using SCSEP participants as staff, these One-Stop Centers are able to increase One-Stop capacity and support core service infrastructure. It was also noted by some One-Stop staff that using SCSEP participants to help staff the Resource Room is a positive strategy for improving customer service for older job seekers.  

- Compared to the mandatory partner programs noted above, the level of involvement and coordination with the TANF or the FS-ET) programs is limited. The lack of collaboration between TANF and the One-Stop system is also documented in a recent JLARC study (2006). Among the certified One-Stop Centers we visited, there was no full-time co-location of TANF with the exception of LWIAs 11 and 12 (where co-location occurs on the same floor in LWIA 11 and within the same office in LWIA 12). Interaction appeared limited to informal referral relationships in about half of the LWIAs. Co-location was credited with facilitating frequent referrals in both directions and, in LWIA 12, VIEW staff are fully integrated with other One-Stop staff.

- In general, most One-Stop Centers have moved from simple physical co-location to a more coordinated service approach for the delivery of basic core services and WIA program services. The One-Stop Centers generally have a streamlined intake process for self-directed and staff-assisted core program services available at the One-Stop Center. Many staff involved in or responsible for administering these core services (e.g., initial intake and orientation, staffing the resource rooms) and for providing WIA intensive and training program services are either cross-trained or organized into functional teams.  

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10 In a few areas, Area Agency on Aging staff occasionally provides on-site trainings to One-Stop Centers on a range of issues relating to working with and addressing the needs of senior job seekers but this appears to be an uncommon practice.

11 For example, in LWIA 15, the One-Stop we visited cross-trains VEC employees from different units (e.g., Business Relations, WIA program services, UI Reemployment Services) so that they can rotate between performing their program/functional responsibilities and staffing
more intensive collaborative efforts to streamline services and leverage funding through practices such as program co-enrollment or co-case management is not unheard of, but generally occurs on a very limited or “occasional” basis.

- Service coordination between the One-Stop and mandatory (and optional) partners is less evident in areas where there is minimal or no on-site partner presence. In these cases, program “silos” often have remained more entrenched, services are not as streamlined or coordinated, and the primary mechanism for coordination is through referrals. The other most common mechanism for fostering collaboration noted by LWIB and One-Stop administrators are monthly or quarterly “partner” meetings (attended by mandatory and non-mandatory partner representatives). These meetings typically provide a forum to present program information, including eligibility and referral processes and an opportunity to keep partners and One-Stop Centers up to date on activities or changes to their respective programs.

- On-site partner presence — even if only for a day or two a week — reportedly helped to increase communication and cross-program knowledge, and facilitated referral and enrollment into partner agency programs. At the same time, it should be noted that staff in some of the more rural sites with small offices and limited partner presence emphasized that there were strong informal linkages and collaborations between partners – an outgrowth of cooperative relationships built up over the years due to the relatively small number of partners and available resources.

**Partnership Successes and Ongoing Challenges.** Taken together, our findings suggest that the basic One-Stop concept of giving jobseekers centralized and coordinated access to a basic set of core, intensive, and training services has been realized. The One-Stop Centers are at least meeting the minimum standards for state certification as comprehensive One-Stop Centers with respect to local One-Stop service delivery design, and some have gone much further than this. Although

the One-Stop reception desk to greet job seekers and assess service needs as customers arrive at the One-Stop Center, assist job seekers with taking advantage of a wide variety of core services available in the One-Stop Resource Room, and make referrals to other program services in the community, etc.
the exact mix of partners and services varied, the basic groundwork for partnerships
had been laid and every LWIB could point to some partner-specific examples of
increased coordination resulting in expanded resources and improved access to
services.

For example, while we noted that One-Stop coordination with the TANF
program did not occur on a widespread basis, there are some examples of local-level
partnering worth noting that did not include co-location. In LWIA 15, the DSS
contracts with the WIB to operate a TANF “Learn to Earn” program. The LWIB in
turn contracts with a vendor to work with TANF recipients for whom training has
been determined an appropriate activity and to co-enroll them in WIA and TANF.
TANF funds are used to support training costs and WIA funds are, on a case-by-case
determination, used to pay for any additional training or supportive services. The
One-Stop Center visited in LWIA 15 also reported that One-Stop Center staff visit a
few DSS offices in the area on a bi-monthly basis to provide DSS clients information
about One-Stop services. Plans were underway to outstation a DSS staff person at
the One-Stop Center. LWIAs 9 and 10 have a fee-for-service agreement with DSS to
provide a structured assessment package for TANF-VIEW clients.

Successful examples of partnership-building extend to non-mandatory
partners as well. For example, it is notable that LWIBs and/or One-Stop Center staff
in six LWIAs mentioned partnerships with agencies and organizations involved with
providing pre- and post release services to ex-offenders. For example, LWIA 7 noted
that the probation division within the Department of Corrections routinely referred
parolees to the One-Stop Center to obtain core services and attend the Center’s Job
Success Workshop. LWIA 10 was providing a series of weekly employment related
workshops for ex-offenders supported through a partnership involving the One-Stop
Center, Department of Corrections, Probation Office, Police Department and faith-
based organizations. LWIA 11 received a $150,000 Virginia Violent and Serious
Offender Reentry Initiative grant from the Department of Corrections to provide
employment and training assistance to incarcerated violent and serious offenders
released under supervision. Finally, Virginia Cares, which operates a pre- and post-
release program for ex-offenders, outstations staff to the One-Stop Centers in LWIAs
7 and 12 one day a week to provide information and referral services about program
offerings.
These successes notwithstanding, the broader goal of bringing diverse partners, services, and resources together under the One-Stop system has yet to be achieved on a widespread basis. To the extent that required partner MOUs are intended to move this process forward, it did not appear to have this effect. In general, MOUs appeared to serve as a framework for collaboration rather than a detailed recipe that was closely followed (and, in fact, some MOUs reviewed for this study lacked specificity). When asked to assess their greatest successes and challenges with partner collaboration, local staff did not bring up MOU agreements but rather focused on the relative success of their hands-on efforts to form partnerships that resulted in co-location arrangements or increased referrals, additional services for their customers, or greater capacity to serve populations with special needs.

LWIBs in Virginia face the same barriers to effective partner collaboration and service integration within One-Stop Centers that have been identified in several previous studies (U.S. GAO 2003; Pindus 2002; Macro et al 2003; Ragan 2003; Cohen 2003; Barnow and King 2005; D’Amico et al 2006, Campbell et al 2006). These include logistical factors (e.g., space issues around co-location); different notions by different partners of what system integration means and opinions about the degree of integration that is desirable or possible; differences in program partners’ primary mission, goals, and organizational cultures; partner programs with different eligibility rules for service receipt, performance measures, and funding streams; differing reporting requirements (and confidentiality issues) across programs; the lack of integrated or compatible information systems and other constraints of existing management information systems.

Of these common barriers, the leading impediment to increased collaboration and co-location with other partner programs identified by local-level LWIB staff and One-Stop managers in virtually all counties concerned limits on available resources both within the workforce development system and among partner agencies/programs. Limited funding among partners was the primary reason given for the existing level of partner presence and general lack of greater co-location, both with respect to the number of agencies co-located and the amount of time spent on-site. And, as discussed in the next section on funding and resource
sharing, there was general consensus across the LWIBs that if a partner agency (other than Wagner-Peyser customer employment services) felt that financial constraints or program rules and regulations precluded it from becoming more actively engaged in One-Stop system-building then, besides the power of persuasion, the LWIBs had no real authority to require a partner to co-locate or otherwise collaborate.

Another barrier to achieving greater coordination and collaboration among partners is a function of the size and capacity of some One-Stop Centers, especially those in rural locations with large service areas. In these areas, partnering agency staff may be limited to just a few staff members (e.g., a program coordinator and a handful of part-time staff), and it may be impossible or very difficult to re-assign staff from a partnering agency location to a One-Stop Center even for several hours or a single day per week. While staff in these more rural areas emphasized close working relationships with partners and a great deal of informal collaboration and coordination, the “bricks and mortar” One-Stop co-location concept raises special challenges within a rural context.

It appeared that the primary way that LWIBs in these areas had dealt with these kinds of service access and capacity challenges was to establish additional satellite and information centers in addition to comprehensive One-Stop Centers (e.g., this approach is best exemplified in LWIA 2, which has 5 certified comprehensive One-Stop Centers, 4 satellite centers and 2 informational centers). Some other strategies for addressing these challenges that we did not find implemented in Virginia but have been tried elsewhere is rotating and outstationing One-Stop staff on an itinerate basis to various agencies other than (or in addition to) satellite centers, have a mobile van serve as a traveling WIA unit with regularly scheduled routes, and invest in building or expanding websites with shared portals that are designed to serve as a virtual One-Stop.

The final major barrier to collaboration that was consistently underscored was a range of difficulties with the state’s current performance management system, the Virginia Workforce Network (VWN). As noted previously, lack of integrated or compatible information systems and other constraints of existing management information systems is a common barrier to implementing an integrated workforce development system for states and localities across the country. In Virginia, as
elsewhere, some LWIBs (e.g. 10, 11, 12, 14, and 16) used their own local systems for case management and internal program management (Macro 2003; D’Amico et al 2005; Salzman 2006). This practice incurred additional data entry because data had to be re-entered into the VWN for official reporting requirements (and therefore created duplication of effort), presenting an additional burden on local staff and budgetary resources but also improved management capacity. At the same time, these efforts offer examples of local-level initiative and commitment to find ways to better gauge performance and formulate strategies for improving performance in the absence of an adequate automated system-wide support to do so.

The shortcomings of the current VWN system have already been recognized by the state as limiting the ability of LWIBs to move closer to the vision of a unified workforce system. New case management software is currently being rolled out by the State and the planned development of a new workforce management information system will provide the VA Workforce Network with the ability to integrate the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), Wagner-Peyser Trade Act, VIEW, and Labor Market Information (LMI) programs and other essential workforce system programs and components under a common information system.

**Funding and Resource-Sharing**

One-Stop funding and resource-sharing issues raise many challenges at the local level for effective system-building and the role of partners in this effort. In addition to WIA formula-based funding allocations for the three WIA programs (adult, dislocated worker, and youth), WIA’s approach to system-building requires mandatory partners to (1) make their core services and access to their intensive services available to participants through the One-Stop system and (2) contribute to the costs (in a way not inconsistent with their authorizing legislation) of creating and maintaining the One-Stop service delivery system. The importance of this resource-sharing requirement for the success of One-Stop system capacity and seamless service delivery takes on even greater significance because WIA does not provide additional funds to operate the One-Stop system and support One-Stop Center partnerships.
Based on the certified comprehensive One-Stop Centers in our study sample, we observed the following with respect to funding and resource-sharing to support One-Stop operations:

- Both LWIB and One-Stop Center administrators voiced serious concerns over the effects of recent cuts in WIA funding. Declines in WIA funding and the continued erosion of Wagner-Peyser funding has led to a shrinking funding base for workforce development services, and this is viewed as limiting overall capacity of the local workforce system to meet job seeker and employer needs. All sites discussed general challenges associated with meeting existing requirements and making progress on realizing strategic goals in the face of flat or declining funding. A few areas (e.g., 3, 4/5, 8, 14, 15, 16), specifically noted that declines in WIA and/or Wagner-Peyser funding (sometimes exacerbated by the phase-out of large grants) had translated into staffing reductions either at the WIB or One-Stop level, exhaustion of funding for ITAs before the end of the program year, and strained staffing levels.

- With the exception of WIA and Wagner-Peyser (and other mandatory partner programs administered by VEC), LWIBs generally have had little to no success in securing additional financial contributions from mandatory partner agencies to offset One-Stop operational costs. As described in the previous section, current involvement of partners in the One-Stop system does help to offset the provision of service costs as well as expand service offerings. This is typically accomplished through out-stationing partner staff in the One-Stop Center including adult education classes and GED testing, client assessments (e.g., Work Keys, TABE), clerical support, accessibility assessments and assistive technology, and distribution of literature. Virtually every LWIB staff and One-Stop manager cited resource constraints faced by partners as the major reason why there was not greater partner presence in the One-Stop Centers and why there was so little support by way of monetary partner contributions.

- LWIAs where the (lead) One-Stop operator was the VEC relied most heavily on Wagner-Peyser funding and other VEC-administered mandatory partner programs to support One-Stop infrastructure. Among these sites, we found
that WIA funding accounts for a small but by no means insignificant, share of the overall One-Stop operating budget – from approximately one-fifth to one-third in the four VEC-operated One-Stops that provided One-Stop budget information.\textsuperscript{12} WIA funding was used to cover a proportional share of rent and other non-personnel operating expenses (e.g., utilities) allocated on the basis of space used, and a portion or full amount of staff salaries and benefits (e.g., One-Stop managers, WIA case managers).

- LWIBs that use organizational entities other than the VEC to serve as their (lead) One-Stop operator primarily relied on WIA and/or combination of contributions from the operator agency (e.g., community college), grant funding, and WIA funding to support One-Stop infrastructure. The extent to which these LWIBs were able to obtain funding or in-kind support from a variety of sources other than WIA varied widely and this had significant implications for the overall level of resources available to expand and enhance One-Stop Center service capacity.

For example, WIA is the primary source of funding to support One-Stop operations (including rent and utilities) in LWIAs 7, 9, 10, and 17. In other LWIAs, by contrast, WIA funding made up a much smaller share of the operating budgets of the One-Stops we visited – for example, roughly half in LWIAs 11 and 14, and less than 10 percent of the One-Stop Center budget in LWIA 12. It is also noteworthy that local government provided a significant level of support to the One-Stop Centers in a few LWIAs. For example, Fairfax County in LWIA 11 covers the costs of space and other non-personnel operating costs as well as a significant share of One-Stop Center staff salaries; the same pattern occurs in LWIA 12 where local governments’ contribution is estimated at $4.3 million for Program Year (PY) 2006. Similarly the One-Stop operator in LWIA 14, Thomas Nelson Community College, shares its space with the One-Stop Center and covers the of some staff salaries. Thus, while standardized comparisons of One-Stop operating

\textsuperscript{12} We were unable to collect complete or comparable One-Stop Center operating budget information. A few VEC-operated sites that did not share budget information explained that the One-Stop Centers do not maintain an overall budget because costs are funded through centralized purchasing. Others provided budgets that did not allow us to determine with reasonable confidence the WIA budgetary share.
budgets are not possible based on the budget information provided at the local level, it is clear that the level of resources currently available to operate One-Stop Centers varies widely across the LWIAs.

**Funding and Resource-Sharing Successes and Ongoing Challenges.** As documented in other literature on WIA implementation, achieving implementation of the resource-sharing requirement in WIA has been extremely challenging, and achieved with different levels of success. For example, the DOL-funded national evaluation of the implementation of WIA in 21 states and 38 localities noted that determining each partner’s fair contribution to support the one-stop infrastructure and inducing them to make financial as opposed to merely in-kind contributions had been a “huge” difficulty and one which had been met with varying degrees of success (D’Amico et al 2005).

Similarly, a 2003 GAO study of the early implementation of WIA in 14 sites found that across most sites, Employment Service was the only partner consistently making a monetary contribution to pay for the One-Stop’s operational costs and that other mandatory partners tended to make in-kind contributions (e.g., Adult Education and Literacy partners provided instructors, training materials, and computers). Limited funding was a primary reason that, even when partner agencies co-located staff at the One-Stop, they often did so on a limited basis and were unable or unwilling to pay a portion of infrastructure costs of the One-Stop (such as rent and utilities). Thus, Virginia’s workforce system has experienced the same kinds of difficulties around partner resource-sharing efforts as other states.

As noted above, LWIB administrators and One-Stop Center managers interviewed for this study were very concerned about and challenged by the level of and overall decline in available funding. However, at the same time that local-level respondents emphasize the challenges posed by insufficient funding, the U.S. Department of Labor has criticized many states, including Virginia, for maintaining significant unexpended WIA funds from year to year, while insisting that unexpended funding translates into unneeded funding. Although this apparent disconnect is clearly an issue worthy of further examination, we did not obtain sufficient budgetary data and other relevant information to be able to assess the share of WIA carry-over
funding in each LWIA, the reasons for its occurrence, or the status of efforts to recapture carry-over funds.

The current environment of shrinking funding levels could arguably heighten motivation to undertake a more concerted effort to increase co-location of partner staff at the One-Stop Centers and further pursue the potential for obtaining monetary contributions from partners. However, LWIB and One-Stop administrators consistently noted that partner agencies were also experiencing financial constraints and generally did not have the staff resources to increase partner co-location at the One-Stop Centers or provide financial support for One-Stop operations. Further, some LWIB and One-Stop staff suggested that efforts to force the issue of providing monetary contributions to support One-Stop operating costs could be counterproductive because it could create tensions that ultimately weaken the existing partnerships and, potentially, lead to some partners pulling staff from One-Stop facilities (e.g., if Adult Education programs were required to pay for classroom space on a per square foot basis they could potentially decide to move from One-Stop Centers to other community facilities that may be less expensive or rent-free).

Many LWIBs (e.g., LWIB 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, and 6) have been successful in expanding their funding base by securing additional funding from outside grants. In a few areas (LWIA 11, 14, and 15), the LWIBs had become non-profit 501(c)(3) organizations in order to expand the funding opportunities available to them. A few LWIBs have hired staff with marketing and grant-writing experience to help identify grant opportunities and write proposals (e.g., LWIA 11 has two LWIB staff dedicated to development and grant-writing activities and the LWIB in LWIA 7 has partnered with another agency to share a grant-writer). By all accounts, the additional grant resources had advanced efforts to fulfill several overlapping goals, including: increasing overall service capacity, promoting new or stronger partnerships with targeted industries or other service agencies, and expanding services to special populations (e.g., military families, individuals with disabilities, ex-offenders, and low-income non-custodial parents). However, most LWIBs lacked the experience and resources to aggressively pursue grant opportunities on a systematic basis and had not experienced success to date in supplementing their funding through this strategy.
LWIB administrators and One-Stop staff recognized the desirability and need for greater partner involvement, including obtaining financial support from partners for One-Stop Center operations. At the same time, from the local-level perspective, the prevailing viewpoint that we repeatedly heard is that LWIBs are placed in the difficult position of being given a mandate but not the requisite authority to require partner participation and cost-sharing. There was little optimism that the current situation would change without state and/or federal level leadership and actions (e.g., negotiating agreements at the state level among agencies/programs for commitments of funding to support local One-Stop operations, mandating a percentage of the partners' allocation for the One-Stop infrastructure, or making it easier to streamline and combine existing funding streams across programs and partner agencies). More generally, there was strong sentiment that additional funding for core services that was not contingent upon partners' in-kind or financial contributions was needed.

**Services for One-Stop Customers**

WIA mandates provision of services through the One-Stop service delivery system targeted on meeting the needs of both job seekers and employers. In recent years, there has been increasing emphasis placed on provision of training and other services for job seekers targeted on the needs of employers and high growth occupations within local areas. In this section, we examine similarities and differences of job seeker and employer services delivered through the One-Stop service delivery system across the Commonwealth’s 16 LWIAs.

**Job Seeker Services**

WIA requires that services for adults and dislocated workers are classified as core, intensive, and training services. These services are to be received in sequence, with only those unable to obtain a job moving on to the next tier. Core services are the least costly services to WIA, but are received by many more individuals through funding by partner programs, such as Wagner-Peyser. Core services must be universally available to all individuals interested in learning more about the labor market or employment opportunities. In addition to mandatory self-service and informational core services, individuals who experience difficulty or prefer to work with a staff member may receive “staff-assisted” core services. Individuals who
cannot find a job through core services alone are eligible to receive intensive services. Individuals who cannot obtain a job after receiving core and intensive services are eligible for training services that may include classroom training, on-the-job training, and customized training developed to meet the needs of specific employers.

All of the certified comprehensive One-Stop Centers visited offer the full range of core, intensive and access to training services as mandated under WIA. While there is no single pattern that all One-Stop Centers follow in serving their customers, there is a common customer flow that generally reflects the sequencing requirement noted above. The vast majority of job seekers receive core services, a significantly smaller proportion of customers receive intensive services, and an even smaller group of customers are enrolled in training. Regardless of the total staff size of the One-Stop Centers visited for this study (ranging from a total of seven staff in LWIA 6 to about 45 staff in LWIA 3), the number of front-line staff providing WIA funded intensive and training services was quite small – typically numbering less than five staff positions in any Center.

**Core Services.** The comprehensive One-Stop Centers in the study sample receive a significant number of visits on a daily basis, although large One-Stop Centers in more densely populated areas have much higher levels of visitor activity than their smaller counterparts, which are often located in more rural areas in the state. The LWIBs were not able to provide data on unduplicated counts of visitors. However, to give a general sense of the differences between One-Stop Center visitor utilization, the annual number of (duplicated) visitors to the One-Stop Centers reported during our site visits ranged from 4,700 in LWIA 7 to 44,000 in LWIA 3. We did not collect information on referral patterns (numbers and by type of agency), either on an incoming or outgoing basis, but the general consensus across all LWIAs was that the vast majority of One-Stop customers were not referred by other agencies.

Despite differences in size and utilization, we found the basic set of core services provided across the LWIAs to be fairly consistent and in accordance with the core service requirements. Although the particulars of the physical layouts are different, all the Centers visited met the objective of being customer-friendly and
conducive to conducting a self-directed job search, and staff were available to provide additional assistance and referrals.

All the One-Stop Centers visited positioned a “greeter” near the entrance. At most sites these staff served various functions – greeting visitors, initial screening/assessment of customer characteristics and needs, general orientation to services, and sometimes also making referrals to higher level services or supportive services, or entering customer information into a database.

The service delivery focal point of core services is the Resource Room. Each One-Stop Center had such an area equipped with a variety of information and tools to assist people with a job search. For example, the Resource Rooms typically included computers with Internet accessibility, access to the ALEX job search site, online Unemployment Insurance claims filing, and word processing capabilities; resource manuals regarding all aspects of job searching; faxing and phone capabilities; printers and copiers; current literature and information on local job openings; and community resources provided by partner agencies and other agencies within the community at-large.

Beyond these basic core services, the provision of group job-related offerings such as job readiness workshops that allow a more intensive focus on specific topics (e.g., workshops on job search strategies, interviewing skills, work readiness skills, and resume writing) varied quite a bit across the LWIAs, with some offering a variety of workshops on a regular basis (to core and intensive clients) and others opting for a more self-directed core service approach.

Some One-Stop Centers used dedicated full-time workers to staff the Resource Room area whereas others relied on cross-trained staff. For example, LWIAs 11 and 16, have staff positions dedicated to staffing the Resource Areas whereas One-Stop Centers in other areas (such as LWIAs 4/5 and 15) have cross-trained staff that rotate between carrying out Resource Room responsibilities with other functional job responsibilities.

Traditional job matching services and other Wagner-Peyser service offerings are also typically more accessible and integrated with other services offered at the
core-service level when the One-Stop Centers is operated by or located in VEC offices. One-Stop Centers that were not operated by the VEC did not have the same number of staff and immediate level of access to the full range of Wagner-Peyser and other VEC- administered programs provided in the VEC-operated One-Stop Centers; however some of these One-Stop Centers also provided a rich menu of core service offerings and partner input. Thus, the range and intensity of core services available to job seekers and the level of partner involvement in core services is reflective of many factors and not solely contingent upon the organizational affiliation of the One-Stop operator.

**Intensive Services.** Intensive services for job seekers who may not be job ready are more personalized and generally require more resources than core services. Examples of intensive services include comprehensive assessments of skills and service needs, development of individual employment plans (IEP), individual or group counseling, and career planning. One-Stop staff noted a variety of different comprehensive assessment tools that were used to help develop the IEP, determine when to move a customer from intensive to training services, and helping customer determine what training program will best help meet his or her goals and needs. The number, type and purpose of assessment tools varied considerably across the LWIAs; the most commonly cited were CareerScope, TABE, and Work Keys.

Although intensive services are treated as a separate and distinct service tier as specified under WIA, the boundaries between core and intensive services in some LWIAs are much more permeable in practice.\(^\text{13}\) For example:

- In LWIA 14, the One-Stop Center has increased the number and type of group workshops and classes offered prior to or upon WIA program enrollment, including staff-assisted core level services focused on job placement. From June 2005–June 2006, One-Stop Center staff and other TNCC staff presented approximately 200 workshops that were attended by over 1,000 One-Stop customers. The workshops are offered on a frequent, 

\(^{13}\) The state has issued policy guidance (03-02) on the delineation of the types of core staff-assisted activities for which WIA registration and enrollment is required. Our study focus was too broad to assess compliance with the specific policy regarding registration versus WIA enrollment.
often weekly basis and cover a range of job search related topics. A twice-weekly two-hour group orientation session provides customers (typically those who have already used core services) a comprehensive overview of One-Stop Center services and serves as the main point where interested customers are assessed for referral to intensive services. A two-day group workshop for intensive services clients was piloted in June 2006 that incorporates many of the job readiness, job search and job retention skills typically covered on a one-on-one basis with intensive services clients. Participants receive a certificate upon completion of all sessions. The shift to increased use of group-based workshops was made in response to heavy staff workloads (funding cuts have led to staff reductions) and the high volume of individuals seeking One-Stop Center services – many whom have multiple barriers and could benefit from more assistance than available through self-directed job search services.

- In LWIA 1, customers identified through an initial screening performed by the “greeter” as potentially eligible for WIA intensive or training services typically attend an intake assessment conducted jointly by a VEC Workforce Service Representative and specialized staff from Occupational Enterprises Incorporated (OEI), an organization that is contracted to provide WIA intensive services. Individuals who are assessed as needing intensive services are referred to an intensive services case manager and those who are determined work-ready (or not interested in receiving intensive services) are referred to a job developer. OEI has much expertise in providing services to hard-to-employ individuals and also provides (non-WIB funded) services to TANF clients with multiple barriers.

- In LWIA 12, customers can receive an interim level of intensive services provided by a non-WIA funded employment specialist that provides a more structured needs assessment and service approach than provided in the resource area. The specialist typically develops an Individualized Employment Plan (IEP) and can refer clients to other One-Stop staff trained to administer a formal assessment (e.g. CareerScope) and other services as needed. If it is determined that more individualized, longer-term assistance is necessary, then the customer will be referred to WIA case managers for intensive
services. Alternatively, a customer could bypass working with the employment specialist if it is determined that the needs of the individual are more suited for WIA intensive services.

**Training.** Most training under WIA is provided through the use of individual training accounts (ITAs), which give the customer flexibility in selecting a training vendor that meets the customer’s interests and aptitudes. An ITA is not an unrestricted voucher. For example, WIBs have funding caps that limit how much the training can cost (and its duration) and these limits varied from $2,700 (LWIA 4/5) to $8,500 (LWIA 8). Most LWIBs and the One-Stops visited – particularly those serving urban areas – indicated that they are able to offer both a wide range of training providers and types of training. Overall, community colleges were reported to be the training provider most commonly used by customers.

Some LWIBs noted that funding earmarked for training had become so tight in recent years that they had either run out of WIA funds for ITAs partway through the program year or rationed ITAs on a quarterly basis through careful decision-making regarding whether to enroll a particular client in training. In LWIA 4/5, it was reported that all WIA Adult and most WIA Dislocated Worker Program funding had already been obligated (as was the case the past program year) just three months into the current program year; administrators in LWIA 14 expected they would need to scale back use of ITAs in the current program year due to reductions in WIA funding and the impending close out of a large grant. In LWIA 8, funding constraints over the past few months prior to this study’s site visit had prompted staff to reign in the use of OJT for the year.

In contrast, both LWIA 7 and 17 reported having more than sufficient funding for training, although for different reasons. Even though LWIA 7 is one of the smallest areas in terms of population size, the WIB’s total WIA allocation is second highest among LWIBs in the state ($3.4 million) and it receives substantial training funds through the Trade Adjustment Act (TAA) because of its generally high unemployment rate and many trade-affected dislocations. LWIA 7 had a high ITA limit ($8,000 for non-CNA training) but also the most complex enrollment process, requiring several mandatory steps, and this could have deter customers from successfully enrolling in training despite the availability of funding.
In support of statewide strategic planning goals, local LWIBs have been heavily engaged in the past few years in understanding local labor market conditions and identifying “high demand” industry clusters within local labor markets. Reflective of these efforts, we found One-Stop staff were very knowledgeable about local labor market trends and reported that they tried to match the types of training offered to both address the desires of customers and up-to-date forecasts of high demand jobs in the local workforce area. For example, in LWIA 14, the LWIB identified four high growth industries on which One-Stop staff are supposed to focus their job placement efforts and, using a “guided choice” approach, staff noted they followed this instruction when discussing training options with WIA clients. In LWIA 16, One-Stop Center supervisors will not approve ITAs for training for jobs in declining industries and occupations.

With the exception of a few LWIAs (LWIA 1, 7, 8, 11, 17), local areas reported little to no use of OJT and/or customized training and their use was limited even in these areas. It should be noted that LWIAs 1 and 12 were both actively engaged in planning new large customized training initiatives, but these had not been implemented at the time of our site visit. One of the longest and most concerted efforts across the state to promote and establish OJT contracts with area employers was found in LWIA 8. This effort had paid off in terms of success in placing individuals in OJT – 154 WIA clients participated in OJT between July 2002 and 2006. LWIB and One-Stop Center staff in this area had found OJT to be an effective way to engage employers, raise the profile of the workforce system, and create long-term job opportunities for job seekers. LWIA 17 has been able to support local economic development efforts by providing training for new and incumbent workers for several new employers to the area. For example, customer service training has been provided for workers that staff several new inbound call centers. In addition, nearly 500 incumbent workers at two local furniture manufacturing plants have received training on quality improvement and “lean” manufacturing processes.

In particular, while several LWIB administrators noted the importance of incumbent worker training as an promising strategy for reaching out to and strengthening partnerships with local employers (as well as providing important skills
upgrading), a lack of WIA funding was cited as a reason why this strategy was not being pursued. These assertions were made in spite of the State having requested and received a waiver in late 2005 from DOL that allows LWIBs to set aside up to 25 percent of each year’s adult and dislocated worker formula allocation to serve incumbent workers and provide incumbent worker funding regardless of an individual’s income. Although the State Council has promulgated an Existing Worker Strategies Policy and Field Guidance Memorandum to assist local administrators with establishing local incumbent worker initiatives, staff in only a handful of areas mentioned the waiver. That is, the increased flexibility afforded under this waiver has not, to our knowledge, resulted in the initiation or expansion of incumbent training initiatives.

Engaging and Serving Employers

The explicit legislative statement that WIA has two customers—employers and job seekers—reinforced expanded and more intensified efforts by LWIBs to engage local businesses within the workforce development system, both as an integral partner and customer. The importance of employer participation in the workforce development system is underscored by the WIA requirement that businesses constitute the majority of members on state and local WIBs.

This employer-led board structure is intended to ensure that employer views and workforce needs are incorporated into workforce development policy and planning at the state level and in each LWIA. Virginia has made a demand-driven workforce system and strong alignment with economic development the cornerstone of its workforce development strategy as exemplified, among other things, by requiring that each WIB submit an annual demand plan to the VWC. This plan must reflect the local employers’ needs and requirements and the availability of trained workers to meet those needs and requirements.

For local One-Stop systems, common challenges associated with engaging employers and creating greater integration between employer and job seeker services have been found in other studies, particularly with respect to the following:

- Firms’ lack of awareness about the business services available to employers through the One-Stop system;
• One-Stop Centers’ difficulties in building credibility with businesses and overcoming negative perceptions of the One-Stop system, sometimes based on negative past experiences;
• Resistance on the part of One-Stop staff to adopting a business-focused (versus jobseeker-focused) emphasis;
• Limited staff time and resources available to be spent on employer outreach and engagement; and
• Challenges to overcoming resistance among employers to utilize One-Stop Center services due to perceptions that job applicants identified through this source lack the specialized skills they need or lack good work habits.

Although both LWIBs and One-Stop Centers have embraced the concept of strong linkages with employers as critical, to some extent, these same challenges were either reported or observed during site visits to the LWIAs. Overall, in the LWIBs included in this study, there was general agreement that inroads had been made but deeper penetration into the universe of employers within local workforce areas was needed and their capacity to do so was constrained by lack of staffing and marketing resources.

For the most part, the number of staff positions dedicated to business services was small, ranging from none (LWIAs 8 and 9 – although LWIA 9 indicated plans to hire a business services person) to four (LWIA 15 – these business service representatives also staff the reception desk once a week on a rotating basis). In a few sites (LWIAs 7, 10, 13, and 15), the WIB had hired a staff person to provide more targeted business (and sometimes also community) outreach or shared a business outreach staff person with another organization. In LWIA 14, there is a Business Liaison position that is jointly funded by DSS and the One-Stop Center to conduct marketing and outreach for both the One-Stop Center and job development for the local DSS VIEW program.

These staffing levels in the comprehensive One-Stops, though, do not represent the full range of efforts to increase employer engagement in the workforce

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14 Although the number of dedicated staff is relatively small, a recent survey of 80 employers conducted by GAO (2006) showed that this “best practice” was only utilized by about half of the employers surveyed.
investment system, since there are several affiliate VEC field offices providing labor-exchange services. Additionally, many LWIB administrators noted they were often heavily involved in developing dialogue and relationships with employers and employer intermediaries, such as the economic development entities or Chambers of Commerce, and considered these activities to be an important component of their jobs. Many One-Stop managers were also engaged in similar kinds of activities. In addition, some administrators mentioned that certain LWIB members had been important in raising the visibility of the One-Stop system within the business community, although we also heard disappointment expressed by some One-Stop managers that employer representation on LWIBs had not translated into greater receptivity by employers in the community to use One-Stop services.

Overall, there was general agreement among administrators and staff across all the LWIAs that while inroads had been made, deeper penetration into the universe of employers was needed and that capacity to do so was constrained by lack of staff and limited marketing resources. The perceived need for more staff and resources dedicated to business services stems in part from increased emphasis on and adoption of employer engagement strategies involving more staff-intensive activities, such as meeting individually with employers and developing ongoing relationships, increasing networking efforts through involvement with employer organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce or industry trade groups, working more closely with economic development entities, and customizing services to employers. The important potential of these kinds of labor intensive and customized employment activities are also cited in other studies of WIA implementation (GAO 2003; GAO 2006; Macro et al 2003, Dunham et al 2004; Campbell et al 2006; Kaziz 2003).

Several LWIBs and One-Stop Centers visited (e.g., LWIAs 7, 10, 11, 12 14, 15, 16) stand out in terms of the sustained level of priority and effort placed on expanding capacity to serve and effectively engage employers through multiple and overlapping strategies. All of them focused on developing locally-based strategies that are informed by the local labor market and tailored to be responsive to the needs of area employers. Administrators in nearly all of these sites mentioned either formal or informal methods of incorporating business feedback (beyond required
customer satisfaction surveys) into their planning strategies and seeking to engage businesses beyond those who serve on the WIB in helping them set priorities.

For example, the WIBs in LWIA 14 and LWIA 16 conducted large employer surveys to jumpstart their outreach to businesses and better understand employers’ main concerns and service needs. Although the response rates were very low, the effort nevertheless was thought to help inform the LWIBs about how they could market public workforce system services to businesses. The LWIB in LWIA 16 has two staff dedicated to business services and these staff spend a large portion of their time on implementing a proactive business client outreach strategy that includes presentations on a broad range of services available through the One-Stop Center and highlights job matching with prospective clients from the state’s VIEW program or One-Stop Center. In LWIA 15, efforts to engage employers take place at the WIB level (with a newly-hired and fully-dedicated business and community outreach staff person), the One-Stop Center Director (who serves on a variety of employer-oriented boards) and four Business Resource Unit staff who combine traditional job matching responsibilities with a great deal of employer outreach activities.

LWIA 10 also provides a good example of the adoption of an increasingly customized employer outreach and engagement strategy, where the LWIB funds a full-time Business Services Administrator to work closely with employers and with Career Center staff on a wide range of employer-related issues. The LWIB director and this designated business services staff person regularly attend Chamber of Commerce meetings and other association meetings where employers are present. The emphasis of employer engagement efforts is on building personal, specialized and ongoing relationships with employers as opposed to individualized job matching and placement.

Another employer engagement strategy that one LWIA had tried and found successful was a deliberate shift away from large job fairs in favor of individualized “boutique” employer workshops where individual employers come to the One-Stop Center and explicitly present their particular hiring expectations and preferences for prospective applicants on a regular basis. This approach reportedly builds stronger relationships with employers while also producing better job matches between employers and job applicants. See Appendix A for other promising strategies
observed in other LWIAs for increasing employer engagement and improving business services.

Given that increasing staff capacity to conduct employer outreach may not be an option due to funding constraints and competing service demands, the Internet offers another mechanism to increase employer engagement and access to One-Stop services. All but one Local Workforce Investment Area (LWIA 10) has a website, but the amount and type of information available varies considerably. Only five LWIAs (with one more in the planning stages) had tailored their websites to include a streamlined and customized information pathway for employers (e.g., a separate drop box for employers, shared portals with economic development entities) to help facilitate employer awareness of One-Stop Center employer services, or access information about labor market conditions and other items of special interest to employers.

On a final note, the lack of federal WIA performance measures to capture efforts at engaging employers and the lack of information on how employers use the system frequently came up as a source of frustration for LWIB and One-Stop managers. As a matter of record, it is worth noting that the State has taken steps to better capture the system’s performance in this area. For example, the State has included two employer/business outcomes (repeat employer customers and employer market penetration) among its system performance indicators that are slated for implementation in 2010, in addition to a return on investment measure that is slated for implementation in 2008.

V. System Assessment and Issues for Consideration

Systems-building is an ongoing process rather than a one-time event and system-building efforts typically fall along a continuum that range from very basic coordination of services (e.g., sharing program information, making informal

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15 This perceived weakness with the system has been documented by GAO, including in a report issued in December 2006 which noted that the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) collects limited information on employer engagement in the One-Stop system in that customer satisfaction surveys provide information on employer satisfaction but do not provide information on how employers use the system and that the assessment of workforce performance with OMB common measures is less than optimal because none relate directly to employer services. DOL is designing a new performance reporting system due to be implemented in July 2007, which is intended to address this current information gap.
referrals) to full system integration (e.g., co-location, unified budgeting, common performance measures and accountability, blended funding) where programmatic boundaries and funding silos are, if not completely eliminated, at least largely transcended. In Virginia, One-Stop system building efforts at the local level to achieve a less fragmented and more integrated, responsive, and efficient service delivery system fall along different points along this continuum.

As discussed in the previous section, most One-Stop Centers have achieved a coordinated service approach for the delivery of basic core services and WIA program services. The One-Stop Centers generally have a streamlined intake process for self-directed and staff-assisted core program services available at the One-Stop Center. Staff involved in or responsible for administering these core services (e.g., initial intake and orientation, staffing the resource rooms) and for providing WIA intensive and training program services are either cross-trained or organized into functional teams. Although the particulars of the physical layout are different, all the One-Stop Centers visited met the objective of being customer-friendly and conducive to conducting a self-directed job search. Staff are generally very accessible and there are processes in place to help customers conduct self-directed job searches as well as identify and serve job seekers that might need intensive services or training. LWIBs and the One-Stop Centers have also generally undertaken a variety of efforts to engage employers, identify demand industries and create an effective bridge between job seekers and employers.

These successes notwithstanding, the broader goal of bringing together diverse partners, services, and resources together under the One-Stop system has yet to be achieved on a widespread basis. Although there are exceptions, the level of full-time co-location involving multiple mandatory partners is generally low across the 16 LWIAs and service coordination between the One-Stop and mandatory (and optional) partners is less evident in areas where there is limited or no on-site partner presence. In many areas, the relatively minimal involvement of a wide range of partners in many LWIAs perpetuates fragmentation and duplication of services, limits the overall capacity, and reduces the ability of local One-Stop system to serve customers with special needs or multiple barriers to employment. To the extent that partners are involved, this involvement provides much needed services. However, with the general exception of Wagner-Peyser, the partnerships do not include
financial support to help support the infrastructure costs of One-Stop operations even though this is required under WIA. For rural areas with large service areas, service capacity and access issues are compounded and complicated by logistical difficulties for co-location and scarcity of partner resources regardless of the feasibility of co-location.

In the area of training, there was ample evidence that LWIBs have made great strides in local demand-planning by using labor market data on projected industry-based business needs, but far less progress had been made in linking that knowledge base to the development of employer-based training strategies either in the form of customized incumbent training initiatives and/or functioning as an intermediary in industry-based or sectoral training programs that involve multiple employers – two promising strategies for increasing wages of workers and addressing the needs of employers (Martinson and Holcomb 2007). And finally, regardless of the geographic size of the Local Workforce Investment Area or organizational structure of the One-Stop Center, local WIB staff and One-Stop Center staff were in agreement that the challenges associated with employer engagement in the workforce development system are quite significant and that more progress could be made if additional staff time and resources could be dedicated to engaging and involving the employer community.

In response to the challenges and successes that the local LWIBs have experienced in serving job seekers and employers through the current One-Stop system, five strategies for moving system-building efforts forward are offered here for consideration, some of which may already be underway.

- **Consider ways to expand funding and capacity for the One-Stop System.** To help increase partner involvement in and contributions to the One-Stop system, the following state-level activities and actions could be considered:
  
  - Increase partner involvement through state-level actions such as: (1) mandating a percentage of the partner’s funding allocation for One-Stop infrastructure; (2) bringing together state-level agencies with administrative authority over the key mandatory partner programs to reconsider how the existing state partner MOU agreement could be
revised and expanded to send a clearer message that local partner participation in the One-Stop system includes co-location (perhaps making this a “requirement” with an opt-out waiver option that could be granted at the LWIB level only if certain criteria were met); and (3) undertaking a cross-agency collaborative review of program rules and regulations to identify where existing programmatic and fiscal requirements impede coordination and take steps, where possible, to remove such barriers as well as identify new ways that existing funding streams and programs could be streamlined. To the extent this process is already underway, it will be important to systematically gain local partner program input into this state-level review to help understand identify the local-level viewpoints on the practical implementation of these policies and insights into what types of existing barriers would require policy or regulatory change versus policy clarification.

- Provide funding for local “capacity building for underserved special population” (e.g., homeless, TANF, ex-offender, limited English speakers etc.) initiatives for which local LWIBs could apply. Funding would be contingent upon the LWIBs ability to demonstrate that the proposed initiative has a strong systems- and capacity-building element, leverages funding, and requires significant involvement by one or two partners that are currently relatively disengaged from the One-Stop system.

- Provide technical assistance to LWIBs interested in applying for grants and consider hiring grant writers (either directly, or in partnership with other entities) to help identify grant opportunities, write proposals, including those that might require regional or multi-jurisdictional collaboration across different LWIAs. Several local areas visited for this study were aggressively looking to expand their funding sources by seeking out federal, state, and foundation grants. A few LWIBs, for example, had grant writers on staff or were considering contracting for part-time or consulting grant-writing assistance. Given that the success of raising funds through grants is not predictable, investing resources into hiring someone with this kind of expertise may not be a viable option for all local workforce areas.
Provide additional technical assistance to the WIBs in developing and expanding incumbent worker training initiatives and sector-based strategies. The degree to which LWIAs have developed or utilized training options under WIA that serve not only to increase worker skills and wages but also as serve effective mechanisms for increasing employer interest, engagement and confidence in the One-Stop system – namely, OJT, customized training for new and incumbent workers, and employer-based sectoral training strategies – is generally infrequent. That is, the increased flexibility afforded under the waiver approved by DOL (aimed at expanding incumbent worker training) has, as yet, resulted in little expansion of incumbent training initiatives at the local level. As part of this effort, local LWIBs could be encouraged to take advantage of this waiver and further explore opportunities for greater coordination employers and with the Department of Business Assistance (a logical partnership for efforts to expand incumbent worker training).

Reduce duplication and better streamline services by encouraging closer coordination between Wagner-Peyser and One-Stop core and employer services in One-Stop Centers that are not operated (or run out of) the VEC. The VEC serves as the One-Stop operator in slightly less than half the certified comprehensive One-Stop Centers in the state. These VEC-operated One-Stop Centers have the advantage of VEC administrators overseeing both Wagner-Peyser and WIA services and this facilitates efforts to coordinate between programs to reduce overlap. However, in the remaining One-Stop Centers, there are varying levels of Wagner-Peyser on-site presence. In light of the tight funding situation faced by LWIAs and One-Stop Centers – there is both motivation and potential to avoid or minimize duplication of services and inefficient use of resources through greater involvement of Wagner-Peyser in One-Stops not operated by the VEC. The State and LWIAs may want to look for more opportunities to establish closer collaboration and a greater streamlined presence between VEC staff responsible for Wagner-Peyser services and One-Stop staff responsible for carrying out similar duties as well as WIA program staff. In addition to the possible cost savings by streamlining duplicative services, more coordination between these overlapping services could potentially improve employers’ understanding of
the workforce system as a whole, reduce confusion over how and where to access various kinds of business assistance, and reduce the potential for employer disenchantment or frustration over being approached by too many employment-related programs.

- Increase or redirect resources to LWIAs, perhaps through improved efforts to leverage funding through partner programs, for the purpose of increasing staff that can be dedicated to engaging employers and piloting a coordinated employer outreach strategy. To the extent that LWIBs are able to obtain funding to support business outreach, as a few LWIAs have done, it appeared that the One-Stop Centers derive a greater benefit if those WIB-level staff activities are coordinated with local One-Stop efforts to carry out business service activities. The state may also want to consider ways to encourage LWIAs to conduct a more coordinated area-wide employer outreach strategy that involves, for example, a larger range of partners to conduct presentations to employers or the creation of a data base to track employer contacts across local partners. From a broader system perspective, this would help address the lack of coordination (and attendant duplication of effort) in the delivery of business services among One-Stop partners, particularly in the LIWAs with One-Stop Centers that are not operated by the VEC or located in VEC field offices.

- Enhance local-level opportunities for sharing information on innovative and best practices. In addition to setting aside some time at regular meetings of the WIB Director’s Association to share best practices, the State could provide opportunities for One-Stop Managers to meet (e.g., bi-annual statewide meetings/conferences) to discuss ways to improve One-Stop operations and services, and share information about promising practices. This would provide a venue for those most “nuts and bolts” knowledge about One-Stop operations have a chance to share ideas and experiences in a way that could supplement the regular communications between LWIB administrators. The state could also consider creating an “internal best practices and troubleshooter” website for LWIB and all One-Stop staff to post information about best practices on an ongoing basis as well as create an electronic forum to exchange questions and tips. Locally developed marketing materials could
also be scanned and kept in a linked clearinghouse so that others could see alternative formats and potentially improve their own marketing materials in a more cost-efficient manner.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX A:

SELECTED LWIB and ONE-STOP CENTER BEST PRACTICES
This Appendix highlights a range of best practices we observed and learned about through study site visits to Virginia’s sixteen Local Workforce Investment Areas (LWIAs) in May-October 2006. The examples of best practices provided here have not been rigorously evaluated for their effectiveness but they do reflect the same or similar kinds of best and promising practices cited in other research studies of WIA implementation at the local level. Additional detail about the context of the LWIB and One-Stop Center administrative and operational context in which these practices occur can be found in the LWIA stand-alone reports (see Appendix B).

It should be underscored that these or similar practices may also be found in other LWIAs but not listed here as our intent is to highlight examples rather than catalogue every best practice found in every LWIA. The practices are organized by the following categories:

A. Engaging and Serving Customers
   1. Services to Job Seekers
   2. Services to Employers
B. Collaboration and Partnerships
C. Leveraging Funding and Resources
A. Engaging and Serving Customers: Job Seekers and Employers

1. Services to Job Seekers

- **Coordinated Initial Intake and Customer Flow across Partner Agencies (LWIA 1).** The One-Stop Center visited in LWIA has implemented a customer flow process that is designed to quickly move job-ready customers into employment while helping increase the work-readiness of more hard-to-serve customers. This is accomplished through a coordinated service delivery approach involving the VEC, which provides core services and access to training services, and Occupational Enterprises Inc. (OEI), an organization with extensive experience in one-on-one case management and assisting hard-to-serve customers that is contracted to provide WIA adult intensive services. Staff from both the VEC and OEI jointly assess and determine a customer’s needs during an intake meeting. Work-ready customers are referred to the VEC Job Developer who uses the standard job order matching process to match the individual’s skills to an available position. Customers with one or more barriers to work are referred to OEI to receive intensive services. Those who are considered job-ready after receipt of intensive services are referred back to the VEC to work with the Job Developer and those who are very low-skilled and with few work prospects are referred on to the Training Counselor. One-Stop Center staff thought this partnership and service delivery approach streamlines staff effort and expands service capacity.

- **Expanded Core Service Capacity through Volunteers (LWIA 10).** The use of multiple volunteers at the Richmond Career Center enhances and expands its core service capacity. The National Student Partnership (NSP), a student-led volunteer service organization is housed in the Career Center and provides the Center with several students on an ongoing basis who volunteer anywhere from 4 to 15 hours per week. It is only the second NSP office in the country to be located in a One-Stop Center and considered a groundbreaking collaboration for both organizations. Volunteers are very informed about a wide range of community resources and provide customers with information and referrals to other agencies and services. The volunteers present a weekly Career Forum workshop to help customers with employment strategies as well as help core service job seekers with resume preparation.

- **Expanded Access to Education and Tutorials through On-line Educational Courses (LWIA 12).** Through its Community Digital Divide Initiative (CDDI) project, Alexandria residents that visit the JobLink One-Stop Center have the opportunity to learn over 500 of the most commonly used Microsoft applications and certification tutorials that are used by employers worldwide. Customers can enhance their current skill set by participating in self-paced, on-line training offered by CDDI partners anytime and anywhere via the Internet. While the customer receives on-line training free-of-charge, the One-Stop Center pays for the on-line tutorials (at a cost of $100 per person) through multiple grants that have allocated funds for education and training. Interested customers must come to the Center and complete the registration and orientation process in order to gain access to the website. The One-Stop Center also constructed a network for CDDI partners to update and expand their on-line class offerings in the courseware library.
• **Using Group Services to Increase and Enhance Core and Intensive Service Offerings (LWIA 14).** The WorkLink One-Stop Center in Hampton combines WIA funding with contributions from its partner and operator, Thomas Nelson Community College, to offer a broad range of job search and work preparation workshops. In Program Year (PY) 2005, the One-Stop Center held 200 workshops attended by over 1,000 One-Stop customers. In addition, a two-day group workshop for intensive services clients was piloted in June 2006 that incorporates many of the job readiness, job search and job retention skills typically covered on a one-on-one basis with intensive services clients. Participants receive a certificate upon completion of all sessions. The shift to increased use of group-based workshops was made to respond to the need to manage heavy staff workload (funding cuts have led to staff reductions) and reach more customers, many whom have multiple barriers and could benefit from more assistance than available through self-directed job search services.

• **Expanding One-Stop Center Capacity to Service Customers with Disabilities (LWIA 12).** In LWIA 12, the JobLink Center provides a high level of service to disabled customers, which reflects the City of Alexandria’s priority to enhance services for the disabled population, particularly through the One-Stop system. JobLink is both an approved “Employment Network” (EN) provider under the Ticket to Work (TtW) program, has two full-time staff trained and available to work with customers with disabilities as well as Department of Rehabilitative Services staff outstationed at the Center part-time. A large and comprehensive array of assistive technology is also available to disabled customers who visit the Resource Area. Customers with disabilities are routed the same way as any JobLink job seeker, but the additional technology allows them to access the full range of self-service or more intensive services.

2. **Services to Employers**

• **Promoting and Establishing On-the-Job Training (OJT) Opportunities (LWIA 8).** One-Stop Center staff have established dozens of contracts with employers for OJT services and placed 154 individuals in OJT between July 2002 and July 2006 under such arrangements—more than any other LWIA—as part of a concerted effort to promote and establish on-the-job training contracts with area employers and thus create long-term job opportunities for job seekers. Staff cited that given the depressed economy, job placement is challenging and often a protracted process even for customers who get ITAs. These relationships raise the profile of the workforce system and help create inroads for targeted recruitment and job placement arrangements for other South Boston Center customers nearby.

• **Automated Database to Provide Up-to-Date Labor Market Information (LMI) for Employers and Job Seekers (LWIAs 11 and 12).** The Northern Virginia WIB and the Alexandria/Arlington WIB have enhanced standard LMI services through the development of a specialized labor market information system (LMIS) for Northern Virginia and Washington D.C. Metro area. The website for the system provides employers with information about skill sets, labor market trends, and salary information to help them find job candidates to fit their needs. Information includes: (1) real-time trends, skill sets and salaries for the Washington, D.C. Metro area and nationwide to help plan your hiring; (2) hiring trends, length of time to fill positions and detailed information on benefits offered based on solid research; and (3) resources from staffing agencies to childcare and local One-Stop offices to help make
this site comprehensive. Employers can post job openings and job announcements via the Internet and then automatically receive notifications of potential applicants via email. Job seekers can post their resumes to this system, so that they can be retrieved and easily reviewed by job seekers.

- **On-the-Job Training (OJT) Subsidies for Newly Hired Employees (LWIA 11).** To support the needs of local employers as well as increase job skills and opportunities for One-Stop customers, the SkillSource Center in Northern Virginia provides OJT wage subsidies with several area employers. The arrangement, whereby workforce system funds are used to support 50 percent of a new worker's wages for up to three months, enables employers to lower their training cost for newly-hired permanent employees that are customers of the One-Stop Center. These subsidies can be used in five regional industry clusters including retail, construction, business services/administrative support, health care, and information technology. The length of the contract term and the maximum hourly OJT wage subsidy is adjusted by sector.

- **Supporting the Formation of New Businesses (LWIA 11).** To support the formation of new businesses in the local area, the LWIB in LWIA 11 partners with the Business Development Assistance Group (a non-profit organization) and the Fairfax County Department of Family Services to provide resources and technical assistance to emerging entrepreneurs and existing businesses throughout Northern Virginia through the SkillSource One-Stop Center in Fairfax. The Center offers extensive labor market information, business print publications, reference materials and workshops. One-on-one counseling services are also available to help prospective entrepreneurs identify the steps that are needed to start a business and to provide technical assistance in essential operational and legal procedures.

- **Supporting Job Seekers and Local Employers through New Hire and Incumbent Worker Training (LWIA 17).** The West Piedmont LWIB supports local economic development efforts by providing training for new hires and incumbent workers for new employers in the area. For example, customer service training has been provided for workers that staff several new inbound call centers. In addition, nearly 500 incumbent workers at two local furniture manufacturing plants have received training on quality improvement and “lean” manufacturing processes.

- **Employer Engagement Strategies Integrated into One-Stop Center Operations to Facilitate Jobseeker Placement (LWIA 10).** Staff at both the LWIB and One-Stop Center in Richmond work collaboratively on building specialized relationships with employers and leveraging those connections to produce greater success in job seeker placement at the One-Stop level. Staff reported a growing disenchantment with the large job fairs because of the difficulty in measuring the return on investment. This led them to focus increasingly on individual employer events, including “boutique” employer workshops, where individual employers come to the Career Center and describe their particular hiring expectations and preferences to prospective applicants on a regular basis. The work of establishing employer relationships and leveraging those connections for success in job seeker placement is facilitated by the recent LWIB staff hire of a full-time Business Services Administrator who works out of the Career Center.

- **Leveraging Partner Resources for Employer Outreach through a Shared Business Outreach Position with Williamsburg Department of Social Services (LWIA 14).** The salary for a full-time Business Liaison position is funded equally by
the City of Williamsburg and the WorkLink Center in the Greater Peninsula area to conduct marketing and outreach for WorkLink and job development for the local VIEW program, the state’s TANF welfare-to-work program. The Business Liaison, along with a Community Relations Coordinator (funded under another grant), focus on “selling” employers on the access they can gain to skilled workers through the WorkLink Center and TANF-VIEW program, and highlight employer services such as free testing and certification of potential hires, on-site job recruitment fairs, and on-the-job and customized training opportunities through the WorkLink Center for improving employee skill-levels.

B. Collaboration and Partnerships

- **Integrating Adult Education and Literacy into the Local One-Stop System. (LWIAs 17).** Providing adult education services on-site increases service capacity and brings new customers into the One-Stop Center who otherwise would not necessarily have known about the full range of One-Stop services available. For example, in LWIA 17, an area with high unemployment and low education levels, providing adult education through the One-Stop system is a key piece of the area’s broader workforce strategy. One satellite center in this LWIA is operated by the Adult Education Center and an adult education staff person is currently outstationed on a weekly basis to the Danville One-Stop Center. Expansion and remodeling efforts currently underway at the Danville One-Stop Center will include room for a new classroom where adult education classes may be held.

- **Coordinated Regional Planning and Resource Leveraging (LWIA 7).** The LWIB in LWIA 7 is one of four partners that have formed the Region 2000 Partnership, a collaborative enterprise that provides a focal point for regional planning and coordinating regional services. The other partners are the Economic Development Council, the Local Government Council, and the Technology Council. The Region 2000 Partnership has its own coordinated and shared strategic vision plan that sets the overarching goals, a single “brand,” and a single website with a shared portal with a coordinated appearance that links to each of the partner websites. Much emphasis is placed on the need for economic development and workforce development to be integrally linked and a great deal of effort is spent on information sharing and coordination. To further promote communication, coordination and the branding as a single entity, the four partners have agreed to co-locate administrative staff in a new site and share the costs of rent.

- **Leveraging WIA and TANF Resources to Support Job Seeker Training (LWIA 15).** In LWIA 15, DSS contracts with the LWIB to operate its Learn to Earn program. The LWIB in turn contracts with a vendor to work with TANF recipients for whom training has been determined an appropriate activity and co-enrolls them in WIA and TANF. TANF funds are used to support training costs and WIA funds will, on a case-by-case determination, be used to pay for any additional training or supportive services. The One-Stop Center also reported that staff visit a few DSS offices in the area on a bi-monthly basis to provide DSS customers with information about One-Stop services and plans were underway to outstation a DSS staff person at the One-Stop Center.

- **Collaborating with Department of Rehabilitative Services to Serve Individuals with Disabilities (LWIA 10).** With the support of a large Department of Labor Customized Employment Program (CEP) grant, the One-Stop Center in
Richmond (LWIA 10) engaged in a multi-year system-building effort to better serve individuals with disabilities through the One-Stop system. This effort included strengthening collaboration and coordination efforts with the Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) to identify and serve customers with disabilities, including co-enrolling and co-case managing participants. Specialized training on a range of disability-related issues was reported to have significantly increased staff ability to identify disabilities, constructively raise and address these issues with customers, make appropriate referrals, and identify promising job opportunities. Plans are underway for the WIA Plan Managers to receive training on how to conduct the kind of job analysis that allows for “job carving,” a technique advanced under the CEP grants for identifying and successfully matching jobs for people with disabilities. Techniques for addressing issues related to disabilities were reported to be very applicable and useful for working with other hard-to-serve individuals, especially the shelter and ex-offender populations.

C. Leveraging Funding and Resources

- **Non-Profit Status for LWIBs Creates Greater Flexibility for Seeking Additional Funding Sources (LWIAs 11, 15 and 16).** Three LWIBs have become incorporated as 501(c)(3) organizations in order to leverage additional funding resources: The SkillSource Group, Inc. in Northern Virginia, Opportunity, Inc. in Hampton Roads, and the Crater Regional Workforce Investment Board, Inc. have all obtain their non-profit status. This allows the LWIBs’ staff to raise additional revenue and resources, accept corporate donations, expand and enhance program services, and serve populations that do not meet WIA eligibility guidelines.

- **Supporting One-Stop Infrastructure Costs and Expanding Service Capacity through Ongoing Contributions of Local Government (9, 11, and 12).** Fairfax County in LWIA 11 provides about half of the One-Stop Centers operating budget, including the costs of space and other non-personnel operating costs and a significant share of One-Stop Center staff salaries. LWIB administrators in LWIA 12 estimate that combined funding received from the City of Alexandria and Arlington County to offset One-Stop Center’s operations in the area is close to $3 million. WIA funding represents less than 10 percent of the total One-Stop operating budget in LWIA 12.

- **Use of Grant Writers as LWIB Staff or Consultants (LWIAs 7 and 11).** A few LWIBs have hired staff with marketing and grant-writing experience to help identify grant opportunities and write proposals. LWIA 11 in Northern Virginia has two LWIB development staff dedicated to grant-writing activities and, as needed, works with other grant writers to bring in additional funding. The LWIB 7 has partnered with another agency to share a grant writer.
APPENDIX B:

LOCAL WORKFORCE INVESTMENT AREA NARRATIVE SUMMARY ASSESSMENTS
I. Introduction

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) authorizes funds to provide the employment and training services of various programs and organizations through a system of One-Stop Career Centers. These One-Stop Career Centers (referred to as Virginia Workforce Centers in the Commonwealth of Virginia) provide a range of employment, training, education and supportive services funded under WIA, Wagner-Peyser, and a variety of other programs. The programs and services provided through One-Stop Career Centers -- and the public and private sector organizations delivering services -- vary substantially across Centers and are intended to be tailored to the unique needs, environment, and characteristics of each locality. The Virginia Workforce Centers operate under the guidance of the Virginia Workforce Council and Workforce Investment Boards in sixteen Workforce Investment Areas across the Commonwealth.

This report is intended to highlight and assess local operations of the Southwest Workforce Investment Board (WIB), with a particular focus on operations of the full-service, certified One-Stop Center in the City of Norton. Report findings are based on a one-day site visit to interview administrators and staff at the Norton One-Stop Career Center and a telephone interview with staff from the company contracted to operate and oversee the implementation of the WIA programs and financing for the region, Chmura Economics and Analytics (CEA). The information we gathered was further supplemented by readily available documentation and data.

II. Local Workforce Investment Board (WIB) Service Area and Operations

Background. Located in the western-most corner of the state, the Southwest WIB oversees operations across the eight local jurisdictions, which includes seven counties (Buchanan, Dickenson, Lee, Russell, Tazewell, and Wise) and the city of Norton, and offers services for just
over 200,000 residents. In an area that is entirely rural, the most populous jurisdiction is the City of Norton. The local workforce area as a whole has an unemployment rate of 4.7 percent as of September 2006, higher than the state average of 3.1 percent.

The Southwest LWIA is experiencing several economic trends that are changing the area’s workforce needs. For decades, Southwest Virginia had a dual economic base in coal mining and garment manufacturing. These industries have experienced some declines in the last decade. The industrial base has diversified, and One-Stop management staff mentioned that they are concentrating in such growth occupations as retail trade and administrative and management occupations, both listed in the Community Profile as areas with a growing number of job openings. One-Stop staff said the area is also seeing a shifting demand for occupations with higher skills requirements. A key challenge has been keeping up with shifting workforce needs, including employers’ needs for different skill sets and low-skilled and low-educated workers’ needs for education and training, re-training or skills upgrading in the new growth sectors. This is particularly challenging in an area where many job seekers and dislocated workers have lower levels of post-secondary education than much of the rest of the state.

The two One-Stop Centers in LWIA I are located approximately two hours from each other. The Norton One-Stop Center, the only certified comprehensive Center, serves the more populous areas around the city of Norton. A smaller, full-service One-Stop Center is located in Cedar Bluff and primarily serves Buchanan, Russell, and Tazewell counties. A satellite office is located at the Wise County Redevelopment and Housing Authority near Norton, and Occupational Enterprises Inc. (OEI) runs a satellite center in Russell County.

**WIB Staffing and Operations.** The Southwest workforce system has undergone extensive structural changes in the last two years, including staff fluctuations and changes in management policies and service provision. To help manage these significant challenges, the Board contracted with CEA in May of 2006 on a monthly basis to temporarily act as WIB staff and to search for a new WIB Executive Director. In February 2006, the WIB also re-awarded program contracts to new service delivery agencies. Staff at every level have found it difficult to steer through the changes while not interrupting or delaying services to customers and the community.

Over the past six months, CEA has implemented a range of changes designed to get LWIA I back on course. It developed IT and management software programs to process financial exchanges, record how funds are used, and monitor outcomes and has developed new tracking systems for job placement. CEA is also in the process of writing or updating the required Business, Strategic, and Action Plans for the region. CEA has relied on its in-house JobsEQ® labor market information software system, available throughout the state, to facilitate job placement and career assessments for clients and align the efforts of the workforce system with the economic development trends in the region. The company feels that these substantial changes in administrative processes and management policies have notably increased the efficiency of the workforce system. Both CEA and One-Stop staff expect that a new Board Staff Director will be in place some time in 2007. Like several other workforce regions in the state, the Southwest region has found it challenging to keep their Board well informed, active, and involved. To help the Board perform their policy-making and oversight role – particularly in the midst of
weathering so many changes in the workforce system – CEA has developed a member’s information package for the Board. Currently, the Board is comprised of 39 members.

The VEC currently operates both of the full-service One-Stop Centers in this region, and the Norton One-Stop received state-approved certification. In early 2006, midway through the program year, the WIB took steps to attain more integrated service delivery and improve WIA client flow and services by contracting with VEC to administer the WIA Adult and Youth Programs. Prior to this, VEC only held the contract to operate the WIA Dislocated Worker Program in the area, a role it had assumed in this region since the outset of WIA. The VEC, in turn, subcontracts WIA Adult and Out-of-School Youth services to OEI, a southwest Virginia workforce development service provider that specializes in intensive case management, education, training, and counseling for individuals seeking employment. Wise County Public Schools is the contractor for the Youth In-School Program for the entire region.

**WIB Funding.** Almost all of the WIB budget for Program Year (PY) 2006 comes directly from WIA formula funds. The PY 2006 budget includes $1.07 million of unobligated money from previous years. WIB staff have since noted that many of these funds have now been expended as of December 2006. It also includes about $50,000 in Rapid Response funds from the state for helping workers transition when a large employer shuts down. The allocations for the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs were $444,000 and $221,000, respectively, for service provision by the VEC under the new contract extending from January through June 2006. For PY 2005, the WIB allocated approximately $320,000 for the WIA Out-of-School Youth program.

A major challenge for the WIB over the last two years has been to resolve financial problems that emerged over the last few years during a period of significant structural changes and challenges in the operation of the workforce system. According to CEA staff, a large portion of the budget carry-over appears to have resulted from inadequate budget management and reporting.

**WIB Partnering.** While the WIB has many partners, its strongest linkages are with the VEC, OEI, and the Wise County School System. The VEC, as noted above, operates both full-service One-Stop centers. The partnership with the VEC allows each entity to leverage each other’s resources to expand and enhance their respective services. VEC staff operate the Center’s Resource Room and provide a full range of core services for One-Stop customers. When appropriate, One-Stop customers are referred by VEC staff to a WIA staff person (located at the One-Stop) for WIA intensive and training services. While the WIB and One-Stop staff offer different evaluations about the effectiveness of service provision, One-Stop staff described OEI as a strong partnership with respect to implementing a coordinated service approach. Both WIB and One-Stop staff characterized OEI as having much experience and expertise in serving job seekers; the WIA system is also able to leverage additional resources for many of its public assistance clients through OEI’s contract with the TANF VIEW program. Wise County Public Schools, one of the Youth Program contractors, contributes in-kind services, including reduced prices on equipment and supplies. The WIA program does not currently receive cash contributions from any of these partners. Finally, both WIB and One-Stop staff described a strong relationship with entities responsible for economic development. The workforce system
collaborates with the economic development system to move workers into new growth sectors and provide education and training in areas that are experiencing job expansion. For example, for PY 2006, the WIB is contributing $100,000 in matching grant dollars to conduct customized training for CGI-AMS, an IT services business.

III. Norton One-Stop Center Operations

**Background.** The VEC office in Norton is contracted by the WIB to provide WIA Adult, Dislocated Worker and Out-of-School Youth services for three counties and the city of Norton, all rural areas with relatively small populations. The Norton One-Stop Center serves upwards of 10,000 clients per year in total. WIA Dislocated Worker services have been offered at this location since 2000. As of February 2006, the center expanded its staff and overall capacity to offer WIA Adult and Out-of-School Youth services. The Norton Center is physically a relatively small facility and is at capacity in terms of staff space. It is centrally located with a prominent “Virginia Workforce Network” sign outside. The building is leased by the VEC, which rents office space to cover dedicated WIA staff and charges for use of some administrative resources.

The VEC’s relationship with OEI, the organization contracted by the Board to provide WIA intensive services, was characterized by One-Stop Center staff as bringing together “the best of both worlds” for WIA client services – a strong emphasis on work first and employer connections through the VEC and a focus on intensive case management, counseling, and skills-building by an organization with extensive experience in one-on-one social service delivery and assisting hard-to-serve clients with multiple barriers to work. OEI staff provide services at the One-Stop Center once or twice a week and at several OEI offices throughout the region.

**One-Stop Center Funding.** The VEC located in Norton has an annual operating budget of approximately $733,000. Funding for programs administered by the VEC other than WIA provide most of the financial resources used to support services available through the Norton One-Stop Center operations; WIA formula funds comprise about one-fifth (about $105,000) of the total One-Stop Center budget. The WIA contract leverages core-level customer services contributed by the VEC, including equipment and staff to guide customers through self-directed services. According to the budget provided by the One-Stop Center, WIA funds are divided between the Adult ($47,000), and Dislocated Worker ($35,000) and Youth Out-of-School ($23,000) programs. WIA funds pay for the salaries of staff that deliver WIA intensive and training services, rent, use of equipment and materials, supportive services to registered customers, and other minor costs. The Norton One-Stop Center does not provide fee-for-service activities to bolster funding for One-Stop operations. The LWIB and Center Director observed that partnering agencies also face funding constraints, and therefore do not have the funds available to contribute towards the One-Stop’s operating costs.

**One-Stop Center Staffing.** The Norton One-Stop Center houses about 27 staff in total, all of whom are VEC employees. (This total includes five new staff hired since March 2006 as a result of the new contract with VEC to operate the WIA Adult and Out-of-School Youth programs.) WIA funds are used to support about one-third (eight) of the staff. These include: a WIA One-Stop Coordinator who is responsible for managing WIA program operations at both the Norton
and Cedar Bluff VEC One-stop Centers and acts as the liaison with OEI; a Dislocated Worker and Adult Program Coordinator responsible for overseeing program services at both the Norton and Cedar Bluff Centers and service coordination with OEI; an Intake and Eligibility Counselor that screens and enrolls applicants; a Training Counselor that helps individuals select and enter education and training programs; and two Office Services Specialists that provide administrative assistance for the WIA programs. The Center also has a Job Development Counselor dedicated exclusively to establishing and maintaining connections with the employer community and job placement for work-ready clients. The Out-of-School Youth Program Coordinator is also located at the Norton site. The VEC Director dedicates about one-fifth of his time to WIA grant management activities. All staff reported that the workload has been manageable. Other VEC staff include clerical support staff, Resource Area staff that help clients access core-level services, a Deputy for the Unemployment Insurance Program, a part-time Tax Representative for businesses, a Workforce Services Representative that determines eligibility for VEC re-employment assistance, several Job Service Representatives that assist clients with job search, and a One-Stop Supervisor.

The Norton One-Stop Center stands out in particular for its apparent success with coordination between Center staff and between OEI, Norton and Cedar Bluff staff. Norton One-Stop Center staff described a clear and deliberate approach to service delivery with multiple examples of collaboration and coordination among staff to review and discuss client cases. (The client flow process is described in more detail in the next section). This process is facilitated by regular communications between staff from different locations and at least monthly group meetings. For example, staff may discuss how to help clients with transportation or childcare access or cost and how to combine WIA services with services offered by the Department of Social Services. Specific staff are assigned to facilitate and hold direct service providers accountable for ensuring that collaboration is occurring. The management style within the Norton One-Stop Center was said to emphasize individual leadership and teamwork as principles for success. A staff team meets occasionally throughout the year to identify any problems and propose solutions or improvements back to management and supervisory staff. As all WIA staff are VEC employees, they have access to the internal VEC ALEX jobs database, a key resource since staff can view details of job listings and contact information for each position that are not otherwise accessible to the general public or non-VEC staff. WIA staff also participate in regular VEC One-Stop Center staff meetings.

Engaging and Serving Job Seekers at the One-Stop Center. The workforce development and welfare systems in this region are strong advocates of a “work first” orientation, which guides their approach to service delivery. Customers that visit the Norton One-Stop Center are offered a combination of services that encompass all of the VEC services in addition to WIA Dislocated Worker, Adult, and Youth services. The Norton One-Stop Center provided core services for over 10,000 job seekers during the past program year. Although anyone can walk in and use services available through the resource area at the One-Stop Center, virtually all customers are first registered for Employment Services prior to using the core services available in the Resource Area. The main services available on-site at the One-Stop Center are labor exchange services (both self-help and staff-assisted), help with obtaining Unemployment Insurance (UI), WIA core, intensive, and training services, and several job search and skills-building workshops.
A distinguishing feature of the Norton One-Stop Center is its client flow process, which is structured to efficiently target one-on-one services to the most hard-to-employ customers. Norton One-Stop Center visitors are greeted at the entrance by a front desk position staffed by Workforce Service Representatives. The Representative tries to quickly determine the specific needs of each customer and guides the individual to services available within the Resource Area. A screening process is designed to identify hard-to-serve clients or clients with one or more barriers to work in order to dedicate its most personalized and long-term services to this group and direct those who are work-ready into job search and placement. If the initial screening indicates the customer may be eligible for WIA intensive or training services, the Representative schedules a one-on-one meeting to determine eligibility. This first meeting is usually attended by both VEC and OEI staff and takes place at either a VEC office or satellite locations. Work-ready customers are referred to the VEC Job Developer who uses the standard job order matching process to match the individual’s skills to an available position. Individuals who are interested and assessed as needing more personalized services are referred to an OEI Case Manager for intensive services. Intensive service participants who are deemed job-ready after receipt of services are then referred back to the VEC to work with the Job Developer, and those who are very low-skilled and have few work prospects are referred on to the Training Counselor.

Several of the key services available at the One-Stop are briefly highlighted below:

- **Core Services.** The One-Stop Center has a designated room near the entrance that serves as what is typically known as a Resource Room. This area is equipped with a variety of information and equipment necessary to conduct a thorough and successful job search. Highlights include four computers with internet accessibility, access to the ALEX job search site, online Unemployment Insurance claims filing, and word processing capabilities; resource manuals regarding all aspects of job searching, including resume writing and interviewing skills; job search videos; fax machines and telephones; printers; a TDD machine; a copier; resume development software; resume paper; current literature on career information and partner and community resources; telephone and business directories; and other supplies for use in a job search. This Resource Room is staffed to assist those who are not computer literate or are new to using a computer in their job search. In addition, the Center has a room that is used as a meeting space that can be used by employers. Another larger conference room is equipped with a TV and teleconference capabilities.

Most customers of the One-Stop Center seek job search assistance. In almost all instances, newcomers to the One-Stop are registered with the Jobs Service. A light level of job search assistance is offered to customers using core services by the Resource Area Representative. In addition to core-level assistance, clients may also be directly referred to the Job Development Counselor. Job search assistance is also provided by the Center through occasional workshops focusing on Employability Skills and Communications Skills and cover topics such as resume writing, filling out applications, conducting a successful job search, and interviewing. Customers learn about these workshops if they check a calendar posted in the resource area or through WIA staff.
• **Intensive Services and Training.** Individuals approved for intensive services work with an OEI case manager who assists clients with removing barriers, accessing support services, and assessing and building basic skills to obtain and maintain a job. About 15 adults and dislocated workers received ITAs in PY 2005. An ITA limit is set at $4,330 for each WIA participant, and most of the training is short-term training (over several months) provided by vocational-technical schools and community colleges. The WIB allows for planning districts and One-Stop Centers to fund on-the-job training or customized training, and the Norton One-Stop Center has developed and used training contracts with several companies (see section below Engaging and Serving Employers). In addition to WIA, the One-Stop Center partners with Adult Education to offer GED preparation classes on-site weekly and ESL classes on-site each month.

**Engaging and Serving Employers at the One-Stop Center.** One-Stop Center management and staff described long-standing ties with many groups and representatives from the business community. Staff at every level emphasized that the Center overall, and especially the Director, are very employer-oriented. In addition to the WIA Job Development Counselor, several other staff at the center are tasked with establishing and maintaining business relationships. The Employer Advisory Committee, which holds monthly meetings attended by about 25 employers, is reportedly very active in this region and plays a helpful role in advising the One-Stop staff on issues concerning the employer community. The One-Stop Center also has linkages with the Society for Human Resource (HR) Management, a group of business HR professionals whom the staff can consult about staffing needs. To establish continuity in employer relationships, each employer that the VEC serves is assigned to one staff person as their Employer Account Representative.

The One-Stop Center also made progress in establishing preferential hiring agreements and customized training programs over the past few years with several businesses. For example, when the Sykes company won a new contract to hire 300 more positions for a call center, the VEC approached the company about designing a customer service training and certification class for potential hires. The VEC and OEI designed a class that taught potential employees the hands-on computer skills they would need for the job. The One-Stop continues to operate a customized work ladder program established several years ago by VEC with a coal-mining company to help workers upgrade from coal miner to mine electrician. As noted earlier, the WIB is contributing $100,000 in matching grant funds to do customized training in the current program year for CGI-AMS.

The One-Stop provides a standard array of customized services for employers interested in listing jobs with the Job Service – for example, taking job orders from employers in-person, via the telephone, or by internet and matching job seekers to job openings. The Center’s staff work with employers to identify potential applicants and employ screening techniques to ensure that candidates closely match employer expectations. WIA- and VEC-funded staff have also worked closely with employers as part of Rapid Response activities using the state’s Rapid Response funds. Center staff rely on their employer customer base for much of their job placement efforts. The staff that are responsible for job placement also rely on the online job listings (e.g., America’s Job Bank) and on the Jobs EQ® program developed by CEA for information on job openings and to stay up-to-date on growth industries and in-demand occupations.
The Norton One-Stop Center has established partnerships with several mandatory partners and some non-mandatory partners. Most of the partnerships involve in-kind services – for example, providing training or consultation services or having a scheduled presence at the facility. The strongest partnership is between the VEC and OEI, as the two groups have a contract for service provision and coordination for the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Out-of-School Youth Programs. One-Stop staff characterized their relationship with OEI as very positive. OEI staff visit the Norton office once or twice a week to assist clients. The Department of Rehabilitative Services provides several services to the One-Stop Center, including assessing the facility’s accessibility, providing an assistive technology (AT) kit, offering occasional Job Seeking Skills classes, and maintaining a teleconferencing system in a One-Stop conference room. The Regional Adult Education Program conducts GED classes on-site and provides skills assessments, including TABE testing and Work Keys testing for clients. Flatwood Job Corps provides supportive services on an appointment basis. Wise County Redevelopment and Housing Authority contributes office space that allows WIA program staff to conduct intake and assessment meetings on-site at the Housing Authority and on an appointment basis. Experience Works provides part-time clerical staff. Appalachian Agency for Senior Citizens occasionally trains Center staff on issues concerning senior citizens. WIA Case Managers sometimes coordinate client plans with the Department of Social Services to access the broadest range of employment assistance and work supports available. Partner meetings are held on a weekly basis at the Norton One-Stop center and are well attended.

IV. Challenges and Interesting/Promising Practices

The WIB and Norton One-Stop face several challenges to providing services and meeting the needs of job seekers and employers, including the following:

- **Challenges with Navigating Structural Changes and Financial Problems.** A major challenge for both WIB and One-Stop staff over the last two years has been to navigate staff changes at the Board level and structural changes across the service delivery system. There have been frequent staff fluctuations and disruptive changes in management policies. The region also established new service provision contracts mid-way through the program year. CEA, an external company, has been contracted to resolve many ensuing problems, restore basic functions of the workforce system, and improve the efficiency of program operations. In the interim, staff at every level have found it difficult to steer through the changes while not interrupting or delaying services to clients and the community, and maintaining a high quality of service. At the same time, the combination of new management and fiscal procedures implemented by CEA suggest that the most significant problems have been overcome and efforts to improve performance continue to progress.

- **Difficulties Getting Other Partners to Contribute Funding to Support One-Stop Operations.** Although the Norton One-Stop Center maintains a substantial number of partnerships with area agencies and organizations, it has experienced difficulties in getting other partnering organization to commit to co-location and has had little success
in obtaining funding from other organizations to offset costs of operating the One-Stop Center. Nearly all costs of operating the One-Stop are borne by the VEC and WIA.

The WIB and One-Stop Center also feature several interesting and promising practices:

- **Success with Service Coordination and Integration.** Services appear to be well integrated within the Norton One-Stop Center. There is also strong coordination between the VEC WIA staff and the staff of OEI. The two organizations have worked collaboratively to bring together their particular expertise in ways that streamline staff effort and expand service capacity.

- **Efficient Client Flow Process.** One of the most distinguishing features of the Norton Center is its client flow process, which is designed to quickly move job ready clients into employment, while helping increase the work-readiness of more hard-to-serve clients. Staff responsibilities and services are clearly delineated at each step. Staff from both the VEC and OEI jointly assess and determine client needs during an intake meeting. Clients with one or more barriers to work are tracked into more personalized and longer-term services. Clients that are immediately or subsequently work-ready are forwarded on to a staff person that specializes in job placement.

- **GED Preparation Class Offered at One-Stop Center.** VEC has been successful in partnering with the local Adult Education program to bring a GED instructor to the One-Stop Center to provide weekly GED classes. This has expanded services available at the One-Stop for existing customers and also brought some new customers to the One-Stop who likely would not have otherwise been served.
I. Introduction

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) authorizes funds to provide the employment and training services of various programs and organizations through a system of One-Stop Career Centers. These One-Stop Career Centers (referred to as Virginia Workforce Centers in the Commonwealth of Virginia) provide a range of employment, training, education and supportive services funded under WIA, Wagner-Peyser, and a variety of other programs. The programs and services provided through One-Stop Career Centers – and the public and private sector organizations delivering services – vary substantially across Centers and are intended to be tailored to the unique needs, environment, and characteristics of each locality. The Virginia Workforce Centers operate under the guidance of the Virginia Workforce Council and Workforce Investment Boards in sixteen Workforce Investment Areas across the Commonwealth.

This report is intended to highlight and assess local operations of the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Investment Board (WIB), with a particular focus on operations of the full-service, certified One-Stop Career Center in Radford. Report findings are based on a one-day site visit to interview administrators and staff at the New River/Mt. Rogers WIB and the Radford One-Stop Center, supplemented by readily available documentation and data.

II. Local Workforce Investment Board (WIB) Service Area and Operations

Background. The New River/Mt. Rogers workforce investment area covers a very large geographic area, extending south from Montgomery County to the Tennessee line and 120 miles east to west. The New River/Mt. Rogers WIB oversees operations across 13 local jurisdictions, including 10 counties (Bland, Carroll, Floyd, Giles, Grayson, Montgomery, Pulaski, Smyth, Washington, and Wythe) and the cities of Bristol, Galax, and Radford. The area is entirely rural.
with many small communities off the beaten path. The region as a whole has an unemployment rate of 3.8 percent, higher than the state average but lower than it has been since 2000.

For decades, the New River/Mt. Rogers area has had an economy based in furniture and textile industries and blue-collar jobs, but these industries have experienced significant declines. The industrial base has diversified, and growth is now concentrated in services and retail. In-demand occupations now tend to have different and sometimes higher skill requirements. In a community of predominantly low-skilled workers with low education levels, a key challenge has been helping unemployed individuals and dislocated workers move into new jobs and, more generally, helping job seekers keep up with shifting workforce needs.

**WIB Staffing and Operations.** The New River/Mt. Rogers WIB is comprised of 43 members. The WIB office is located in Radford, near the One-Stop Center visited for this study. The WIB is staffed by 5 full-time positions: an Executive Director; an Assistant Director responsible for One-Stop Center operations, including providing technical assistance and monitoring compliance and performance data; a Program Planner responsible for program planning, labor market information, gathering and evaluating Training Provider data, and developing agency Memorandum of Understanding; a System Administrator responsible for the MIS system; and an Administrative Assistant. It was reported that funding pressures would likely translate in reduction of one WIB staff person for Program Year (PY) 2007.

Because it covers such a large area, the region has service delivery offices in many different communities. There are five One-Stop Centers in LWIA II, each located about 30 to 40 miles from one another. A major accomplishment for the region is receiving the state’s new Tier 2 certification for all of the five full-service Centers. All five One-Stop Centers are operated by the VEC, which also holds the contract for WIA Dislocated Worker Program services across the entire area. In its capacity as the One-Stop Center Operator, the VEC subcontracts with Goodwill Industries of the Valleys, Inc., Giles County Partnership for Excellence Foundation, Rooftop of Virginia CAP, and People, Inc. of Southwest Virginia to provide Adult services. The WIB directly contracts with the same organizations to provide Youth services. Goodwill Industries of the Valleys, Inc. provides WIA services in the Radford One Stop Center. Rooftop of Virginia CAP provides WIA services in the Galax One Stop Center. People, Inc. of Southwest Virginia provides WIA services in the Wytheville, Marion and Bristol One Stop Centers. Satellite offices are located at the Giles County Partnership for Excellence Foundation in Narrows, the Goodwill Industries of the Valleys Workforce Development Center in Dublin, People Inc. of Southwest Virginia in Bristol, and Rooftop of Virginia CAP in Galax. Two information centers are located in Goodwill Industries of the Valleys in Christiansburg and in the Marion People Inc.’s office.

**WIB Funding.** The New River/Mt. Rogers WIB has a budget of $2,759,887 for PY 2006. The entire amount comes directly from WIA formula funds. The PY 2006 budget includes approximately $291,405 of carry-over funds from the previous program year. The WIB is most challenged by significant reductions in WIA formula funds since 2002, when the budget peaked at over $4 million. WIA funding declines have been across the board, but most pronounced for the Adult and Youth Programs. Adult Program funds have declined by over one-third between PY 2003 and PY 2006, from $1.3 million to approximately $869,000. The PY 2006 allocation
for the area represents a 16.7 percent cut overall, including an 18 percent, 16 percent, and 19 percent cut in Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth funds respectively. WIB staff stressed the challenges and difficulties these funding cuts presented and also noted attempts to obtain additional grants to supplement the workforce system budget have not met with any success.

**WIB Partnering.** The WIB has strong linkages with the VEC, the One-Stop Operator of all five full-service One-Stop Centers. The partnership with the VEC allows each entity to leverage each other’s resource to expand and enhance their respective required services. VEC staff the Centers’ resource rooms and provide a full set of core services for One-Stop customers. One-Stop customers are referred by VEC staff to co-located WIA staff for the Dislocated Worker, Adult and Youth Programs.

The New River/Mount Rogers WIB also has a strong partnership with Goodwill Industries of the Valleys, Inc., the operator of WIA Adult and Youth services in the New River Valley. The WIB leverages substantial in-kind resources through this partnership. This has been particularly instrumental in enabling the LWIB to provide continuity of service in the past few years, during which WIA funding has been declining. Because Goodwill is not dependent on the WIA contract for its program operations and has its own independently funded corporate system that contributes in-kind services for the delivery of WIA services, it can leverage resources from other programs operated by the organization. The contract with Goodwill, in addition to direct services, pays for 85 percent of the salary for a full-time Program Supervisor (who is also Vice President of Workforce Development for Goodwill Industries of the Valleys). Beyond service delivery staff, the linkage with Goodwill enables further leveraging of funds by using Goodwill’s Human Resource and Accounting Systems to handle these functions for the WIA programs. To manage the project, Goodwill independently funds one full-time Accounting staff member. (Goodwill also holds the contract for the provision of Adult and Youth Programs for the adjacent LWIA III, which provides some economies of scale for this WIA service provider.)

Other partners include the Department of Rehabilitative Services, Adult Education, and the Department of Social Services, all of which provide services at several of the One-Stop Centers. In the last year, the WIB co-sponsored a job fair with New River Community College and Wythe County. The WIB also worked with New River Community College several years ago to develop a class to improve soft skills for non-industry-specific manufacturing jobs titled “Industry Pre-Employment Certificate.” The class was piloted but was discontinued because it did not attract sufficient numbers of participants.

Finally, both WIB and One-Stop Center staff indicated that they have found it consistently difficult over the years to obtain cash contributions or establish tangible resource sharing with partner agencies, as these organizations are also constrained with tight budgets.

**III. Radford One-Stop Center Operations**

**Background.** The One-Stop Center in Radford offers the full range of WIA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and In-School and Out-of-School Youth services for the city of Radford and surrounding jurisdictions. The Center received nearly 40,000 visitors in PY 2005 (an average of
about 760 per week). It has provided WIA Dislocated Worker services since 2000, and Goodwill has provided WIA Adult and Youth services at this VEC location for a similar length of time. The Center is centrally located with a prominent “Virginia Workforce Network” sign displayed outside. The VEC rents office space to the WIA staff and charges for use of some administrative resources. A major challenge to accessing workforce services in the region is the lack of public transportation. Even with the multiple number of One-Stop Centers and satellite and information offices, many potential clients either do not know about the One-Stop Center or do not have the means to travel there.

One-Stop Center Funding. The VEC/Radford One Stop Center has an annual operating budget of approximately $575,000 for PY 2005. WIA formula funds comprise about one-fifth of this operating budget. One-Stop services are largely funded by non-WIA programs administered by the VEC. The WIA contract leverages core-level customer services contributed by the VEC, including equipment and staff to guide customers through self-directed services. WIA funds pay for the salaries of one Goodwill Case Manager that assists WIA-eligible dislocated workers, as well as for rent, use of equipment and materials, and other minor costs.

One-Stop Center Staffing. The Radford One-Stop Center houses about 23 staff in total, almost all of whom are VEC employees. WIA funds are used to support three staff positions. Many VEC and partner staff are involved in the provision of core-level services. VEC Workforce Service Representatives perform many functions, including core services and referrals to WIA staff. Several Workforce Service Representatives provide core services in the Resource Area that include helping clients with their job search, providing assistance with resume preparation and other work-related documents, and helping clients with VEC services such as online filing for Unemployment Insurance. These VEC staff also conduct one-on-one screenings to determine client eligibility for several programs, including WIA, and receive job orders (along with other VEC staff) from employers and match clients with available jobs.

WIA intensive services are provided by a VEC-employed Dislocated Worker Case Manager (the supervisor is based in the Marion VEC) and a Goodwill-employed Adult and Youth Case Manager. These WIA Case Managers also perform several functions including assessment, enrollment, job matching, and maintaining contact with employers for potential job placement. The Goodwill Case Manager also conducts outreach for the WIA youth program by visiting schools to meet with students and guidance counselors. Clerical support for the front desk is performed by a VEC Workforce Service Representative, other VEC administrative staff located at the Center, or partner agency staff. Staff described very positive relationships and a pleasant and cooperative work environment at the Center.

The multiple roles and responsibilities assumed by One-Stop Center staff leads to a substantial level of VEC and WIA service coordination and integration. Several staff reported that they and their colleagues are knowledgeable about the many programs and services offered at the Center and that staff referrals to the WIA program and other services are appropriate. Customers can usually speak with a Workforce Service Representative, and often a WIA Case Manager, on unscheduled visits without having to wait long. At the same time, staff are challenged by the need to fulfill these multiple roles and responsibilities. Case managers generally carry caseloads
of 40-50 cases and noted that heavy workloads reduce the amount of one-on-one time staff can dedicate to clients and make it difficult to stay on top of their cases.

**Engaging and Serving Job Seekers at the One-Stop Center.** Customers that visit the Radford One-Stop Center are offered a combination of services that encompass all of the VEC services in addition to WIA Dislocated Worker, Adult and Youth services. In a recent article on the Center by a local newsletter, the Center was described as “the Wal-Mart of the social service system.” The majority of Radford One-Stop customers are walk-ins, although WIA staff said they sometimes receive referrals from the Department of Social Services and local community-based organizations. The main services available on-site at the One-Stop Center are labor exchange services (both self-help and staff-assisted), help with obtaining Unemployment Insurance (UI), WIA core and intensive and training services, and several job search and skills-building workshops. One-Stop staff highlighted that lack of transportation and childcare are two key barriers many clients need assistance with to facilitate entry or re-entry into work.

Several of the key services available at the Radford One-Stop Center are briefly highlighted below:

- **Intake and Core Services.** A front desk clerk greets customers as they come into the One-Stop and first-time visitors are guided through the multiple services offered at the Center, including a Resource Area. Virtually all visitors are first registered with the VEC Employment Service prior to using the core services available in the Resource Area. In addition, customers are asked to fill out an information form. This form is passed onto the Workforce Service Representative who conducts the initial assessment to determine whether the customer needs individualized assistance either through referrals to other supports or job search assistance.

The Resource Area is equipped with a variety of information and equipment necessary to conduct a thorough job search. Highlights include 18 computers with internet accessibility, access to the ALEX job search site, online Unemployment Insurance claims filing; and word processing capabilities; resource manuals regarding all aspects of job searching, including resume writing and interviewing skills; job search videos; fax machines and telephones; printers; TDD machine; copier; resume development software; current literature on career information and partner and community resources; telephone and business directories; and other supplies for use in a job search.

The Resource Area is staffed by Workforce Service Representatives to assist those who are not computer literate or are new to using a computer for their job search. An Adult Education representative also is available on a weekly basis to help clients using core or intensive services. Another larger conference room is equipped with a TV and teleconference capabilities donated by the Department of Rehabilitative Services. The Resource Area also has information and brochures on One-Stop Center and partner services available in Spanish.

Most customers of the One-Stop Center seek job search assistance. Customers can receive individualized assistance with their job search from the Workforce Service Representatives without being enrolled in any VEC or WIA program. Assistance is also provided by the One-
Stop Center through occasional Re-Employment Services Orientation (RSO) workshops offered by the VEC. WIA staff usually present information on the WIA program at these workshops. Customers learn about these workshops by checking a calendar posted in the Resource Area or from the staff. Clients enrolled in a WIA program are given CareerScope and the TABE to assess their aptitudes, abilities, and interests.

- **Intensive Services and Training.** Adult customers that have used core services but have not been successful with their job search are referred to either the WIA Dislocated Worker or Adult Case Manager. There is usually no co-management or coordination of cases between staff or partner agencies, with the exception of clients who may have disabilities and may need services from the Department of Rehabilitative Services. About 239 adults and dislocated workers received ITAs in PY 2005. An ITA limit is set at $4,000 for each WIA participant per 12-month period of time. Staff said there are an adequate numbers of training providers in the area, although some programs, such as LPN program at New River Community College, has a long waiting list. In addition to providing WIA intensive services and access to training, on-site weekly GED preparation classes are offered by the county Adult Education program provider. Funding is the major constraint on client access to education or training; the budget for ITAs has declined in each of the last few years.

*Engaging and Serving Employers at the One-Stop Center.* Although there are no special initiatives or set-aside funding available to partner with the employer community, the Radford One-Stop Center provides a standard array of customized services for employers interested in listing jobs with the Job Service. These services include taking job orders from employers in-person, via the telephone, or by internet and matching job seekers to job openings. Several staff at the One-Stop Center maintain occasional one-on-one contact with area employers to help with their job placement efforts. The One-Stop Center also has a Business Resource Unit (BRU) made up of two staff who dedicate a portion of their time to marketing to the business and employer community in addition to providing direct client services. In the past year, BRU staff were involved in planning several large job fairs co-sponsored by the WIB and New River Community College and they helped recruit the 50 to 75 employers that showcased their employment opportunities. The BRU staff attend the VEC Employer Advisory Committee meetings, monthly meetings of the Society of Human Resource Managers, and Chamber of Commerce meetings where they network with area business representatives and learn about workforce needs, trends, and job openings. The BRU staff occasionally conduct personal visits to employers. WIA and VEC staff have also worked closely with employers as part of Rapid Response activities using the State’s Rapid Response funds, such as when the Volvo truck plant laid off hundreds of workers.

The WIB has linkages with New River Valley Economic Development Alliance. The WIB Executive Director is an ad hoc, non-voting, member of the New River Valley Economic Development Alliance, and the Alliance Executive Director is an ad hoc, non-voting, member of the WIB. As recently as 2006, they co-sponsored an area-wide economic forum to discuss area workforce needs and attracting and serving new businesses.

*One-Stop Center Partnering.* The Radford One-Stop Center’s strongest partnerships is between the VEC and Goodwill Industries of the Valley. Goodwill staff are located at the Radford One-
Stop Center facility and staff from both agencies described their relationship in positive terms. Radford One-Stop Center staff noted that the VEC had long established partnerships with several other area agencies and organizations that pre-dated WIA but have more aggressively pursued partnerships since implementing WIA. WIA opened the lines of communication with some additional agencies, although it still took a great deal of effort to educate partners about WIA and determine what types of collaboration is required or would be most helpful. Most of the partnerships involve in-kind services. The Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) provides several services to the One-Stop Center, including assessing the facility’s accessibility, providing an assistive technology kit, and maintaining a teleconferencing system in the One-Stop conference room. WIA Case Managers said they sometimes coordinate client plans with the DRS for clients with a disability.

Montgomery County Public Schools Adult Education program conducts weekly GED classes and testing on-site. BRU staff work with the local community college to plan for job fairs. New River Community College also occasionally offers a class on computer skills and resume writing programs attended by clients using core and intensive services. The Community College also donated several computers to the Center. When the WIB sponsored Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) classes and testing for employees and prospective employees of Gatorade, the Radford One-Stop Center provided recruitment services. Partner meetings are held on a quarterly basis at the Radford One-Stop Center and are reportedly well attended.

IV. Challenges and Interesting/Promising Practices

The New River/Mt. Rogers WIB and Radford One-Stop Center face several challenges to providing services and meeting the needs of job seekers and employers, including the following:

- **Cuts in WIA Formula Funds Have Curtailed Services.** Since 2002, the area has experienced significant declines in WIA formula funds across the board but particularly for the Adult and Youth Programs. It was stressed that these funding declines have significantly curtailed the ability of the One-Stop Center and attendant WIA programs to adequately serve the area, especially given its large geographic size, high number of jurisdictions, fluctuating unemployment rates in some communities, plant lay-offs, and the low education and low-skilled nature of the workforce. Recent budget cuts will likely translate into reductions in what is considered already lean staffing levels at the service centers, reducing the number of satellite or information centers, as well a reduction in WIB staff positions.

- **Difficulties Getting Other Partners to Contribute Funding to Support One-Stop Operations.** The Radford One-Stop Center has experienced difficulties in getting other partnering organization to commit to co-location and has had no success in obtaining funding from other organizations to offset costs of operating the One-Stop Center. All costs of operating the One-Stop Center are borne by VEC and WIA. WIB and One-Stop administrators indicated that leadership is needed at the state level to encourage or enforce local resource sharing; although local agencies are making efforts, they are also strapped for funding.
• **Staffing Capacity is Stretched.** In light of limited funding for staff positions and the goal of greater integration of services, One-Stop Center staff are expected to assume a variety of roles and responsibilities. Although this has promoted staff knowledge and awareness of the range of programs and services available to customers through the One-Stop Center, the resulting heavy workload is perceived to negatively impact customer service in terms of limiting the amount of one-on-one time with clients in need of intensive services – especially those with multiple barriers that may need more attention to successfully transition into work.

The New River/Mt. Rogers WIB and Radford One-Stop Center feature several interesting and promising practices:

• **Success with Establishing GED Preparation Class Offered at One-Stop Center.** The LWIB and One-Stop Center have been successful in partnering with the local Adult Education program to bring a GED instructor to the One-Stop Center to provide weekly GED classes.

• **Developing Linkages with Economic Development.** The WIB has developed a relationship with the New River Valley Economic Development Alliance. The Alliance Director sits on the WIA Board and the WIB Executive Director is a member of the Economic Development Alliance. Tangible evidence of a growing partnership is the recent co-sponsorship of an area-wide economic forum to discuss workforce needs ways to attract and serve new businesses.

• **The WIB and Radford One-Stop Center Have Increased Visibility of the Center Among Job Seekers and the Employer Community.** The One-Stop Center has increased its visibility through several large job fairs co-sponsored by the WIB and New River Community College. The One-Stop Center has staff dedicated to employer outreach that network and meet with business representatives at VEC Employer Advisory Committee meetings, monthly meetings of the New River Valley Society of Human Resource Managers, and the Chamber of Commerce, among others. Staff also mentioned that there is increased visibility among community residents about the One-Stop Center and the range of services it offers.
I. Introduction

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) authorizes funds to provide the employment and training services of various programs and organizations through a system of One-Stop Career Centers. These One-Stop Career Centers (referred to as Virginia Workforce Centers in the Commonwealth of Virginia) provide a range of employment, training, education and supportive services funded under WIA, Wagner-Peyser, and a variety of other programs. The programs and services provided through One-Stop Career Centers – and the public and private sector organizations delivering services – vary substantially across Centers and are intended to be tailored to the unique needs, environment, and characteristics of each locality. The Virginia Workforce Centers operate under the guidance of the Virginia Workforce Council and Workforce Investment Boards in sixteen Workforce Investment Areas across the Commonwealth.

This report is intended to highlight and assess local operations of the Western Virginia Workforce Investment Board (WIB), with a particular focus on operations of the full-service, certified One-Stop Career Center in the city of Roanoke. Report findings are based on a one-day site visit to interview administrators and staff at the Western Virginia WIB and the Roanoke City One-Stop Career Center, supplemented by readily available documentation and data.

II. Local Workforce Investment Board (WIB) Service Area and Operations

Background. LWIA III covers a predominantly rural area of 2,329 square miles in western Virginia. The Western WIB oversees operations across the eight local jurisdictions, which includes five counties (Alleghany, Botetourt, Craig, Franklin, Roanoke) and three cities (Covington, Roanoke, Salem) and offers services for just over 300,000 residents. The most populous jurisdiction is the city of Roanoke (95,000), followed by Roanoke County (86,000) and Franklin County (47,000). The region as a whole has an unemployment rate of 3.3 percent,
similar to the state average. However, the sub-areas have diverse economies. The northern area that includes the County of Alleghany and the City of Covington is generally economically depressed due to a decline in manufacturing. The City of Roanoke and the surrounding area is the most economically prosperous. Franklin County, located in the south on the edge of the “tobacco belt,” has also experienced the loss of textile jobs and is economically vulnerable.

The Western Virginia area is experiencing several economic trends that are changing the area’s workforce needs. The area’s economic strengths have traditionally been in manufacturing, textile and furniture production, and traditional agriculture. These have also been the areas that have experienced the largest declines. Growth is now concentrated in health care, high-tech agriculture, and information technology and software development, representing divergent industry sectors.

Ultimately, these trends are challenging the workforce system’s ability to build inroads with employers from the growth sectors and help workers transition into jobs in these industries. A key challenge has been keeping up with shifting workforce needs, including employers’ needs for different skill sets and low-skilled and low-educated workers’ needs for education and training, re-training or skills upgrading in the new growth sectors. The industry shifts have created some under-employment and significant mismatch between employers’ needs and workers’ employment history and skills. Staff interviewed for this study also noted that the area is experiencing a greater number of college graduates with no appropriate job prospects. A related challenge has been finding and re-developing the list of training and vocational providers who can help workers or prospective workers gain skills, an objective that the WIB Board completed earlier this year.

Three comprehensive One-Stop Centers are located within the “three separate economies” of the this LWIA in order to offer WIA services appropriate to the different workforce and business needs of the local economies. The three comprehensive One-Stop Centers are located in a VEC office in Covington (not certified), a VEC office in the City of Roanoke (certified), and a Consortium-operated One-Stop Center in Rocky Mount (certified). The WIB’s administrative office is also located in the City of Roanoke.

**WIB Staffing and Operations.** The Western Virginia workforce system has undergone extensive changes in the last two years. In contrast to past years, the current WIA Board and oversight committees are leaner and more focused on policy-making and broad oversight than operational details. This shift is the result of efforts to restructure the Board that involved reducing the overall size of the WIB total to 15 members, including one business person representing each of the eight jurisdictions, mandated partners and three ex-officio members. At the time of the site visit in September 2006, the Board was staffed full-time by an Executive Director, an Office Administrator, two part-time Accountants responsible for fiscal data collection and oversight, and one seasonal part-time Program Monitor. WIB staff also provide ongoing technical assistance to support and enhance operations at the three One-Stop Centers. Since the site visit, it was reported that the office administration position has been eliminated. The part-time accountant had taken on additional administrative duties and clerical duties and in the future will be provided by a 20-hour per week Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) participant.
The WIB has designated a “Workforce Center Consortium” to operate the One-Stop Centers. The consortium is made up of several of the most active partner agencies in the workforce system. Like the WIB itself, this Workforce Center Consortium has also undergone restructuring. The previous nine member operating consortium was disbanded and a new consortium was established that has four key partners. The Consortium Committee was also streamlined in the spring of 2006 from nine agencies to four key partners – the VEC, Virginia Western Community College, Goodwill Industries of the Valleys, and the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS). Two of these partners, the VEC and Goodwill, are program operators for WIA services. The Consortium staff, or the Management Team, includes the WIB President, Consortium Chair, Franklin County Workforce Development Director, and the new Coordinator position. The WIB has relied on the new Consortium to help guide the Board on matters relating to One-Stop operations.

Under the consortium arrangement, the WIB designated the VEC to provide WIA Dislocated Worker services and Goodwill Industries to provide WIA Adult services. (Note: The WIA Youth Services Program was competitively bid and awarded to Goodwill Industries for Planning Year (PY) 2006.) WIA Adult and Youth services have been provided by Goodwill Industries of the Valleys each year since 2004. Goodwill has one full-time Case Manager at each of the One-Stop Centers in Roanoke, Covington and Rocky Mount; one Case Manager at the Villages at Lincoln (a HUD-based residential area in the City of Roanoke) and two Case Managers at a satellite office in Salem. The VEC offers WIA Dislocated Worker services in all three comprehensive One-Stop Centers and relies on the Goodwill Case Manager at the Roanoke One-Stop Center to provide Adult and Youth services. This arrangement may promote administrative efficiencies because Goodwill Industries also contracts with the adjacent LWIA II WIB to provide the same set of WIA services.

**WIB Funding.** The Western Virginia WIB has a budget of $1.3 million for PY 2006, all of which is WIA formula funds. The PY 2006 budget includes approximately $177,000 of money carried over from the previous year in anticipation of future WIA funding cuts that could force a shutdown in programs and discontinuity in program services for clients. From PY 2005 to 2006, WIA funds allocated to the Western WIB decreased were reduce by about 15 percent, including about 19 percent in the Adult Program, 6 percent in the Dislocated Worker Program, and 34 percent for the Youth Programs.

For PY 2006, the WIB is allocating approximately $100,000 for One-Stop Center operations, including administrative funds and the salary of an information specialist in the Rocky Mount One-Stop Center and a new Workforce System Coordinator to serve all three One-Stop Centers. The Workforce System Coordinator, a position that is anticipated to be filled by fall 2006 and based out of the Roanoke One-Stop Center, will focus on collecting and sharing best practices among the One-Stop Centers and cross training between agency partners.

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1 Goodwill also contracts with the adjacent LWIA 2 New Rivers/Mt. Rogers to provide the same set of WIA services.
**WIB Partnering.** The WIB has strong partnerships with the VEC and with Goodwill Industries, as well as linkages with Virginia Western Community College, the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS), and the Roanoke School System. The WIB has designated the VEC to be the One-Stop operator in two of the three full-service One-Stop Centers. The partnership with the VEC allows each entity to leverage each other’s resources to expand and enhance their respective required services. The One-Stop Centers’ Resource Areas, where core services are provided, are staffed (at no cost) primarily by SCSEP participants. When appropriate, One-Stop visitors are referred by core staff to an on-site WIA staff person for WIA Dislocated Worker and Adult services.

LWIA III also leverages substantial in-kind resources through the partnership with Goodwill Industries, the organization designated by the WIB’s Workforce Center Consortium to serve as the WIA Adult services provider and the contracted Youth services provider. This arrangement has enabled the LWIB to sustain the same level and continuity of service in the past few years despite declines in WIA funding. Goodwill is not dependent on the WIA contract for its program operations; instead it has its own independently funded corporate system that contributes in-kind services for the administration of WIA services and it can leverage resources from other programs run by the organization. Goodwill staff relayed during the site visit that, in addition to direct services, the contract with Goodwill pays for 85 percent of the salary for a full-time Program Supervisor (the Vice President of Workforce Development for Goodwill Industries of the Valleys) who also serves as Goodwill’s representative on the Consortium. Beyond service delivery staff, the WIB leverages WIA funds through Goodwill’s Human Resource and Accounting Systems. To manage the project, Goodwill independently funds one full-time accounting staff member. Goodwill estimates that its organization provides approximately $70,000 in in-kind services to One-Stop operations in LWIA III.

Both Virginia Western Community College and DRS are members of the WIB and serve on the Workforce Center Consortium. At the local level, these relationships generate many referrals in both directions. The WIB has not yet developed strong linkages with the area’s Economic Development representatives, as the Economic Development community is perceived as having a more traditional approach to economic development. Economic development activity in the area is mainly focused on attracting large companies irrespective of workforce needs and WIA is still viewed as part of traditional social services agencies. The WIB does not currently receive funding from any of its partners.

The WIB office is located in the Roanoke Higher Education Center, a system of colleges and universities. This physical co-location arrangement has provided the WIB an opportunity to interact and form relationships with the 16 workforce-related educational institutions in the facility. These linkages are further enhanced by the hiring of a new WIB Director who has extensive prior experience in higher education public relations and brings strong ties with many of the institutions that could play an important role in increasing the capacity of the workforce system. In particular, many of the colleges in the area are on the region’s list of approved training providers, thus diversifying the training opportunities for clients.
III. Roanoke One-Stop Center Operations

Background. The Roanoke One-Stop Center is a certified, comprehensive full-service One-Stop Center that provides WIA Dislocated Worker, Adult and Youth services for the City of Roanoke and the surrounding vicinity. Roanoke, as noted previously, is the most populous area of LWIA III, and its One-Stop Center was visited by about 44,000 people in PY 2005, the most of any One-Stop Center in the area. WIA services have been offered at this location since 2000 when Virginia first implemented WIA. The VEC offers Dislocated Worker services and one Goodwill staff person serves the Adult and Youth population.

The Roanoke One-Stop Center is very spacious, measuring about 20,000 square feet. The building is leased by the VEC, which hosts or rents office space to VEC and partner staff and charges for the use of some administrative resources. The Roanoke One-Stop Center was selected in part because it is centrally located near the Valley View Mall shops, the largest shopping center in LWIA III. The office is close to the bus line and features a prominent “Virginia Workforce Network” sign outside. At the time of the site visit, the entrance was located on a backstreet that was only accessible to the mail. It is reported that a second, more accessible entrance has since been opened.

One-Stop Center Funding. The total budget for the Roanoke One-Stop Center is not known, as the One-Stop Center does not maintain such a budget. Management staff noted that in addition to VEC staff, the facility hosts or rents space to a wide spectrum of partners that work out of the building full- or part-time, and who operate separately and maintain independent budgets. Some of these agencies and organizations pay rent and/or contribute money to center operations, but many do not. This makes it difficult to estimate a dollar amount for services offered through the Center. For PY 2006, WIB staff reported that the WIB allocated $100,000 for One-Stop staff and administration.

Partner agencies that work out of the One-Stop Center for two or more days of the week are required to pay rent. The Center does not provide fee-for-service activities to bolster funding for One-Stop operations. The LWIB and management staff observed that partnering agencies face varying degrees of funding constraints, and therefore do not have the funds available to contribute to paying the costs of One-Stop operations.

LWIA III makes use of substantial VEC and Goodwill partner resources. By co-locating WIA services at the VEC field office, WIA leverages core-level customer services, including equipment and staff to guide customers through self-directed services and, in turn, VEC restructured its center operations and client flow to comply with WIA requirements. WIA funds pay for about three-quarters of the salary for two VEC Case Managers that deliver WIA services to Dislocated Workers as well some indirect program costs. Goodwill Industries uses WIA funds to pay rent for the office space used by their full-time Adult and Youth services Case Manager.

Management, supervisory and direct service staff all expressed, to differing degrees, that they felt challenged by the decline in funds available to provide WIA services under their respective contracts. WIA formula funds and the contract amounts for the service delivery partners have
declined in recent years and are anticipated to continue to decline. The total amount of the contract with the VEC for PY 2006 is $316,000. This represents an eight percent decrease since 2004. The Goodwill contract for Adult services increased 9 percent from 2004 to 2005, but dropped 38 percent to $350,000 for PY 2006; its contract for Youth services declined by almost a quarter from 2004. Goodwill staff are most concerned about the cuts in the Adult Program. The decreases for both Adult and Youth services have led to staffing reductions at satellite locations – in Franklin County and at Dabney S. Lancaster Community College – where Goodwill had stationed full- or part-time staff.

The biggest funding constraint for the Roanoke One-Stop Center relates to the lack of funds available for marketing Center services, for staff training or other efforts that could improve the integration of services at the Center. The One-Stop Center reportedly does not have enough funds or a separate allocation that it can dedicate to advertising its comprehensive services. Lack of funding was also cited as the reason for not providing ongoing staff training. The VEC paid for a recent re-design and re-construction of the entrance to the facility with the aim of improving access and overall client flow.

**One-Stop Center Staffing.** The Roanoke One-Stop Center is one of the largest Workforce Centers in Virginia with about 45 full- or part-time staff in total (not counting partners with on-site presence), the vast majority (42) of whom are VEC employees. WIA funds are used to support three-quarters of the time of three of the 10 Workforce Service Representatives who provide WIA services. At the time of the site visit, one of the One-Stop Managers visited the Covington office twice per week to help potential WIA clients at that location. (WIB staff report that this position has since been filled with a full-time manager and the Dislocated Worker and Adult Program at the Covington One-Stop Center now have full-time Case Managers.) The Workforce Service Representatives perform a range of activities that include providing core services, intake and processing UI benefits claims, registering clients with the Employment Service, registering clients that can dual-enroll with the Trade Act Program, and matching clients with jobs. They also alternate working at one of the front desks where they offer core services. As core services staff, they answer customers’ initial questions and assess their needs, access the proper forms, and show them the Resource Room. Core level support is also offered by two SCSEP participants who staff the triage desk at the entrance.

Goodwill has one full-time Case Manager at the One-Stop Center that performs intake and processing for WIA Adult and Youth services, assesses client needs, and provides on-on-one counseling and job search assistance. Beginning in PY 2006, a Workforce Center Coordinator will serve all three One-Stop Centers. Other VEC staff include a One-Stop Center Manager, additional clerical support staff, Deputies for the Unemployment Insurance program, Business Resource Center staff that take job orders from area businesses and maintain linkages with employers, and part-time Tax Representatives for businesses.

The VEC Business Resource Center staff and Goodwill Case Manager both report that their workload is generally manageable and that they have the capacity to serve the number of incoming clients. Workforce Service Representatives handle between 40 and 50 cases, and the WIA Case Manager typically serves around 35 cases. As VEC staff, the Workforce Service Representatives have access to information on employers and jobs not available to the public.
The Goodwill WIA Case Manager does not have access to the same databases available to VEC employees but noted that she relies heavily on new jobs information via a weekly One-Stop Center internal email update. The Goodwill Case Manager sends the MIS report on all clients to a WIA grant administrator at Goodwill that compiles the information and reports to the WIB.

Finally, both VEC and Goodwill staff describe that while the referral process has begun to improve over the past several months, VEC staff have very limited knowledge of the range of WIA services and basic program eligibility guidelines and often make incorrect referrals to the WIA staff. The process was described as inefficient both for the client and the staff who spend a significant share of their time assessing the needs of clients that are not eligible for the WIA services they can provide. Some staff interviewed urged appropriate training to address this problem. After the site visit, WIB staff reported that this issue was a primary motivating factor for the WIB to provide $100,000 for Workforce Center operations in PY 2006 and for the hiring of a Workforce System Coordinator who has begun to work with the partners to develop a cross-training plan and to improve the referral process.

**Engaging and Serving Job Seekers at the One-Stop Center.** The vast majority of customers that visit the Roanoke One-Stop Center initially seek VEC-related services but subsequently interact with a broad range of on-site partner agencies and organizations. One of the Roanoke One-Stop Center’s greatest strengths is the number and range of partners that are available at the facility in a full- or part-time capacity. However, the One-Stop Center has also experienced challenges in developing an integrated inter-agency seamless system of employment-related assistance. The partners operate independently and they report to hierarchies within their own organizations and agencies. For most, the only method of coordination is monthly partner meetings. One-Stop Center staff noted that they are informed about the presence of partners at the facility and there are good professional relationships between them, but they see a need for improving the client flow among the partners.

Both the One-Stop staff and WIB staff report that they place high priority on marketing One-Stop Center services so that more clients will know about and take advantage of the broad set of comprehensive services available through the facility. It was noted that job seekers and employers still tend to view the One-Stop Center as the Unemployment Insurance office (with some related VEC services) and that stigma remains attached to seeking help from a government office. Staff members agree on the need to educate workers so that they view the facility as a place where they can get help with finding work, improving their skills, advancing their careers, and getting connected with employers. Similarly, marketing efforts should also be extended to employers so that they see the One-Stop Center as a resource they can use to connect with good job candidates.

At the time of the site visit, most marketing ideas were still in the planning stages. One-Stop Center staff offered one example of an effort to educate the community about the Roanoke Center that was implemented in cooperation with a local TV station two years ago. The TV station produced at no charge a three-hour long presentation on the One-Stop Center that was broadcast on public TV throughout the region. The station also produced a short 15-minute segment that featured basic information on One-Stop Center and this video is shown in one of the lobby areas in streaming video during business hours. Several years ago, the VEC local
agency produced a brochure on the WIA Dislocated Worker Program that lists the Virginia Workforce Centers in the region that provide such services. The One-Stop Center also has a partner referral list that is distributed to every visitor and Goodwill has produced brochures for each of its WIA services.

Several key services available at the Roanoke One-Stop Center are briefly highlighted below:

- **Intake and Core Services.** Although the Roanoke One-Stop Center is among the largest in the Commonwealth, the entrance, service desks and two Resource Areas are moderate in size. The main entrance is staffed by a desk clerk (a SCSEP participant) who is surrounded by resources that job seekers can freely use on their own. These core services include resource manuals regarding all aspects of job searching, including resume writing and interviewing skills; job search videos; fax machines and telephones; printers; TDD machine; copier; current literature on career information and partner and community resources; telephone and business directories; and other supplies for use in a job search, and a few computers with internet access. Additional computerized resources for job search are located in an area behind the main entrance, including access to the ALEX job search site, online Unemployment Insurance claims filing, and word processing capabilities, resume development software, and resume paper. This Resource Area is staffed to assist those who are not computer literate or are new to using a computer in their job search.

Client flow traffic has been re-routed so that visitors can encounter information about and request help for a broader list of services available on-site. Staff report that the new client flow at the entrance is less confusing to visitors and greatly improved client flow. The desk clerk briefly introduces the customer to the services offered on-site including VEC, WIA and partner services, and inquires about the customer’s needs. The desk clerk determines the general needs of each customer, hands them a pamphlet that includes a list of One-Stop Center services, and guides the individual through either the services available in the Resource Rooms or to other One-Stop staff for more personalized services. Customers that appear to need VEC-offered services, such as UI benefits information and filing, are forwarded to a lobby where staff behind another service desk can help them obtain forms and help them with VEC-specific services, including setting appointments for one-on-one help that may include WIA Dislocated Worker services. Customers that appear to need Adult or Youth WIA services or other partner services are guided to the appropriate person through another door. The Center has limited assisted technology resources for clients with a disability.

Job search assistance is available at the One-Stop Center through self-directed use of core services in the two Resource Areas; workshops focusing on topics of interest such as resume writing, filling out applications, conducting a successful job search, and interviewing; on-site job fairs; and one-on-one assistance through the Dislocated Worker, Adult and Youth Programs. Volunteers from the Human Resource community lead a 4-5 hour Job Skills class twice a month as a core service. VEC Case Managers lead a Re-Employment Services Orientation specifically designed for Unemployment Insurance beneficiaries, and a Re-Employment Skills Workshop that is conducted twice a month.
• **Intensive Services and Training.** WIA staff at the Roanoke One-Stop Center provide intensive services and training for customers who met eligibility requirements under the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs. One-Stop customers that are unable to find employment through core services and are also interested in pursuing training meet with a WIA Case Manager to assess eligibility and need for intensive and training services. The ITA limit is set at $4,000 for each WIA participant. Staff estimate that the vast majority (80 percent) of education and training is provided through the various local community colleges. Other education and training is provided by vocational-technical schools and by employers at the work site. Staff emphasized that they would like to have more access to or information about providers that offer short-term (a few months) education and training towards a degree or certificate. Some Dislocated Workers are eligible to be dual-enrolled with the Trade Act Program, so resources from both programs can be leveraged. On-the-job training is used infrequently. Clients enrolled in intensive services work with their WIA Case Manager and are provided skills and interests assessments, some of which are conducted by the Roanoke City Adult Education program. WIA Case Managers often help clients with transportation, referrals to day care, and relocation expenses for clients that find jobs far away from where they live.

Engaging and Serving Employers at the One-Stop Center. The Roanoke One-Stop Center operates a limited set of direct employer services geared toward improving job matching services for clients enrolled in the VEC Job Service. The VEC agency provides a standard array of customized services for employers through its Business Services Unit—for example, taking job orders from employers in-person, via the telephone, or by internet; and matching job seekers to job openings. The Business Service Unit’s four employees work with employers to identify potential applicants and employ screening techniques to ensure that candidates closely match employer expectations. The Goodwill WIA Case Manager has access to some information on jobs listed with the agency but does not typically work with the Business Services Unit to place clients in those jobs. VEC Case Managers for WIA Dislocated Workers have also worked with employers as part of Rapid Response activities using the State’s Rapid Response funds. Aside from the Job Service, the Business Service Unit also holds monthly in-house job fairs. Staff would like to expanded outreach to businesses to create more visibility among the employer community but cited limited time and funds for not yet doing so.

One-Stop Center Partnering. The Roanoke One-Stop Center has one of the most extensive lists of fully or partially co-located partners in the state. The One-Stop Center brings together the services of 15 groups and agencies. The partner agencies include the public education system, community action agencies, several public social service agencies, private social service agencies, and a community college. Two of the partners, Goodwill and the League of Older Americans (Title V program), are co-located full-time while others have a weekly or monthly scheduled presence.
The following partners have a regular or scheduled presence at the Center:

- Blue Ridge Independent Living Center: Benefits planning, peer counseling, independent living skills training, information, and referral and advocacy for individuals with disabilities (by appointment only);
- Experience Works: Specialized training and job placement assistance for mature workers (by appointment only);
- Job Corps: Residential education and employment training for young adults (on-site twice per week);
- Literacy Volunteers of Roanoke Valley: Free educational services and computer skills training (by appointment only);
- Refugee and Immigration Services: Interpretation and translation services and counseling (by appointment);
- Roanoke City Public Schools Adult Education: Reading classes, Pre-GED and GED testing on-site (on-site twice per week);
- Roanoke County Public Schools: Career, technical and adult education training opportunities (by appointment);
- Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority: (by appointment only);
- Total Action Against Poverty: Tutoring, college access, Adult Basic Education, job readiness, job placement and support services (on-site one day per week);
- USDA Forest Service: Community Service employment and training opportunities for mature adults (on-site three days per week by appointment);
- Centers for Financial Education: Financial and credit education classes (by appointment only);
- Virginia Department for the Blind and Visually Impaired (by appointment only);
- Virginia Department of Rehabilitation Services (on-site one day per week);
- Virginia Department of Social Services (on-site twice per month); and
- Virginia Western Community College (by appointment only)

Several One-Stop staff agreed that the passage of WIA fostered a significantly higher level of cooperation between agencies locally that did not previously exist. The WIB/One-Stop Center has had only limited success in getting on-site partners to contribute to rent and supplies. Partners that work out of the One-Stop Center for two or more days per week are required to pay rent. At present, Goodwill Industries, Roanoke City Adult Education, and the League of Older Americans meet these criteria. In terms of maintaining coordination with partnering organizations, the Western Virginia One-Stop Center holds a monthly partner meeting. The partners meetings are reportedly well attended and serve as forums for sharing information about each organization’s services to heighten awareness, enhance referral arrangements, and address service gaps and other problems that may arise.

IV. Challenges and Interesting/Promising Practices

The Western Virginia WIB and Roanoke One-Stop Center face several challenges to providing services and meeting the needs of job seekers and employers, including the following:
• **Challenges Achieving Service Integration Despite Extensive Partner Involvement.** Despite the Roanoke One-Stop Center’s extensive list of partners that provide services on-site, achieving service integration presents a real challenge. In spite of the colocation, most of the client interaction with the different organizations and agencies on-site is by referrals and appointments. Case Managers and partners do share information, but services are largely uncoordinated. Some of the staff suggested that local efforts to develop a seamless system of employment-related assistance would benefit from a greater push for integration and resource-sharing at the state and federal level.

• **Difficulties Getting Other Partners to Contribute Funding to Support One-Stop Operations.** A chief problem faced by the One-Stop Center is getting other partnering organization to contribute funding from other organizations to offset costs of operating the One-Stop Center. Nearly all of the costs of operating the One-Stop are borne by the VEC. One-Stop administrators indicated that additional state funding from other departments is needed to support One-Stop operations locally because local agencies are so strapped for funding.

• **Marketing to Job-Seekers and Employers.** Lack of funding has severely limited the One-Stop Center’s ability to achieve their outreach and marketing goals. Workers and employers still see the facility as the Unemployment Insurance office and related VEC services and the vast majority of customers that visit the Roanoke One-Stop Center specifically seek VEC-related services. The WIB has set aside a portion of WIA funds for the development of a comprehensive advertising campaign. Both the Board and One-Stop staff emphasized they are planning to increase advertising and marketing of One-Stop Center services.

The WIB and Roanoke One-Stop Center feature several interesting and promising practices, including:

• **Range of Classes and Services Offered at One-Stop Center.** The Roanoke One-Stop Center’s greatest strengths is the number and range of partners providing services at the facility in a full- or part-time capacity. They include the public education system, community action agencies, several public social service agencies, private social service agencies, and a community college. Although they face challenges in improving service integration among the partners, One-Stop Center staff noted that they are informed about the presence of partners at the facility and there are good professional relationships among them.

• **Core Partnerships Leverage Expertise and Substantial Resources.** The partnerships with the VEC and Goodwill Industries allows each entity to leverage each other’s resources to expand and enhance their respective required services. The VEC independently runs the core services component of One-Stop operations. The arrangement with Goodwill has enabled the LWIB to sustain the same level and continuity of service in the past few years despite declines in WIA funding.
I. Introduction

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) authorizes funds to provide the employment and training services of various programs and organizations through a system of One-Stop Career Centers. These One-Stop Career Centers (referred to as Virginia Workforce Centers in the Commonwealth of Virginia) provide a range of employment, training, education and supportive services funded under WIA, Wagner-Peyser, and a variety of other programs. The programs and services provided through One-Stop Career Centers – and the public and private sector organizations delivering services – vary substantially across Centers and are tailored to the unique needs, environment, and characteristics of each locality. The Virginia Workforce Centers operate under the guidance of the Virginia Workforce Council and Workforce Investment Boards in sixteen Workforce Investment Areas across the Commonwealth.

This report is intended to highlight and assess local operations of the Shenandoah Valley Workforce Investment Board (WIB), with a particular focus on operations of the full-service, certified One-Stop Career Center in Harrisonburg. Report findings are based on a one-day site visit to interview administrators and staff at the Shenandoah Valley WIB and the Harrisonburg One-Stop Career Center, supplemented by readily available documentation and data.

SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY WORKFORCE INVESTMENT AREA (LWIAs IV AND V)

Note: LWIB Area IV and V merged into a single LWIB, effective July 1, 2006

Geographic Area Served: 16 jurisdictions served, including 10 counties and 6 cities. LWIB Area IV includes 6 counties (Augusta, Bath, Highland, Page, Rockbridge, Rockingham Counties) and 5 cities (the cities of Buena Vista, Harrisonburg, Lexington, Staunton, and Wayneboro); LWIB V includes 4 counties (Clarke, Frederick, Shenandoah, and Warren) and 1 city (Winchester).

Virginia Workforce Centers: 1 full-service certified Center in Harrisonburg; 3 satellite Centers in Luray, Fishersville, and Buena Vista. A fourth satellite center will open in Winchester in October 2006.


Unemployment rate (September 2006): LWIB IV– 2.8%; LWIB V – 3.0%

Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth WIA Funding (PY 2005): LWIB IV: $485,862; Adult – $187,582; Dislocated Worker – $298,280 and LWIB V: $231,836 ; Adult – $82,284; Dislocated Worker – $149,552

Adult and Dislocated WIA Enrollments (PY 2005): LWIB IV: 488; Adult – 224; Dislocated Worker – 264; LWIB V: 277; Adult – 174; Dislocated Worker – 103
II. Local Workforce Investment Board (WIB) Service Area and Operations

Background. The Shenandoah Valley Workforce Investment Board’s administrative offices are located at the full-service One-Stop Career Center in Harrisonburg, Virginia. As of July 1, 2006, the Shenandoah Valley WIB took over responsibility for operation of the WIA programs in LWIB IV and V. The merged WIB covers a large, predominantly rural area in the northwestern region of the Commonwealth. The WIB oversees operations across 16 local jurisdictions, which includes 10 counties and six cities (see table above). Despite its generally low unemployment rate, the area served has been affected by several closures of large manufacturing plants (including recent closures of a Wrangler plant, a Conagra facility, and several other smaller manufacturing facilities), resulting in excess of 2,000 job losses. An underlying trend is a loss of higher paying manufacturing jobs, which are increasingly being replaced by lower paying jobs (requiring a different skills set) in the service sector – particularly the retail, health care, and education sectors.

WIB Staffing and Operations. The LWIB has a staff of 3 full-time and one part-time staff. The size and composition of the staff did not change as a result of the recent merger of LWIBs IV and V. The WIB rents office space at the Harrisonburg One-Stop Career Center from the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC). Because of its relatively small staff size, the WIB emphasizes contracting out through a competitive bid process to other organizations for delivery of most services (including One-Stop and Youth services). The WIB funds one direct service delivery staff position (at the One-Stop Career Center in Harrisonburg) to provide WIA intensive services and oversee issuance of ITAs. WIA core, intensive, and training services are made available at the full-service certified One-Stop located in Harrisonburg and three satellite offices located in Luray, Fishersville, and Buena Vista (with a fourth satellite office to be opened in Winchester in October 2006).

WIB Funding. Because of its generally low unemployment rate (two to three percent over the past several years), the WIB’s total WIA allocation is quite low given its population and extended service area. LWIB IV’s total WIA (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) allocation for PY 2005 was $762,523. This total WIA allocation decreased for the current program year (2006) to $696,697 for LWIB IV. With the merging in of LWIB V with LWIB IV in July 2006, the total WIA allocation for the much expanded service area increased by about one-third – to a total of $993,718. The WIB operated in past years with some additional sources of funding (including H1-B, Welfare-to-Work, and Rapid Response funding), but for the current program year (2006-07) these supplemental sources have dried up, with the exception of $128,000 of Rapid Response funding and $10,000 of funding through the state to facilitate the merger of areas IV and V.

One major challenge faced by the WIB in recent years is the very limited WIA funding that can be devoted to Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) despite the strong demand for training. For example, just three months into the current program year, funding available to support ITAs under its WIA Adult Program was already completely obligated and there was only a small amount of funding remaining to support ITAs under the WIA Dislocated Worker Program. The WIB does not generally fund on-the-job training or customized training under the WIA program.
**WIB Partnering.** The WIB director and staff place strong emphasis on establishing partnerships. The WIB has fostered particularly strong linkages with the VEC, the local community college system, the local school board, and economic development agencies serving the various counties and cities within the service area. The LWIB has contracted with the VEC to operate its certified, full-service One-Stop at the VEC offices in Harrisonburg. VEC staff operate the One-Stop Center’s resource room and provide a full range of core services for One-Stop customers. When appropriate, One-Stop customers are referred by VEC staff to a WIA staff person (located at the One-Stop Center) for intensive and training services.

The WIB has historically maintained strong linkages with the community colleges serving the area—particularly Blue Ridge Community College, which over the past two program years has supplemented the WIB’s available funds for training by $52,000 (for LWIB IV). The local school board (in Harrisonburg) operates a GED class at the Harrisonburg One-Stop Career Center each afternoon. The WIB includes several representatives of economic development agencies on the board (including from the Shenandoah Partnership) and the Executive Director of the WIB meets frequently with local economic development officials to keep abreast of economic development activity. The WIB is able to maintain partnerships through regular Network Facilitation Meetings (discussed later in this report). While partnering agencies make available a wide range of services to meet varied needs of WIA and One-Stop customers, the WIB does not currently receive funding from any of these partners.

**III. Harrisonburg One-Stop Center Operations**

**Background.** The Harrisonburg One-Stop Career Center is the full-service, certified One-Stop Center for LWIBs IV and V. This One-Stop Center is one of the four current One-Stop Career Centers serving job seekers and employers in the LWIBs IV and V – with the other satellite Centers operating in Luray, Buena Vista, and Fishersville. A fifth One-Stop Center – which will also be a satellite Center – will open in Winchester in October 2006 (note: as of September 2006, a bid process was nearly completed to select a vendor to operate this Center). The Harrisonburg One-Stop Career Center operates out of a building owned by the VEC. About two-thirds of this building is devoted to One-Stop Center operations (primarily providing services under WIA and Wagner-Peyser funding) and one-third of the building is rented by VEC to the Virginia Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS). The One-Stop Center opened in 2001.

**One-Stop Center Funding.** Much of the funding to operate the One-Stop Career Center in Harrisonburg comes from the VEC. No overall budget figure for the current program year was available because much of the costs of One-Stop operations are funded by VEC through centralized purchasing. For the current program year, the WIB is paying $75,000 to the VEC to cover rent and equipment costs for its three full-time and one-part-time WIA staff located at the Harrisonburg One-Stop Center. The WIB is the only partner to provide funding to VEC to offset the costs of operating this One-Stop Center. The costs are based on an allocation formula that takes into account proportional space utilized by WIA staff in the One-Stop Center. It is anticipated that the Job Corps will locate a staff person at the Harrisonburg One-Stop in the coming months and also pay rent according to this same allocation formula. The Harrisonburg One-Stop Center does not provide fee-for-service activities to bolster funding for One-Stop
operations. The LWIB and Center Directors observed that partnering agencies are all strapped for funding, and therefore do not have the funds available to contribute to paying costs of One-Stop operations.

One-Stop Center Staffing. As of September 2006, a total of 18 paid staff worked at the Harrisonburg One-Stop Center – 11 of these staff were full-time (“classified) employees and seven were part-time (“wage” employees). The 11 full-time workers are VEC employees, although one of these workers is contracted year-to-year and covered by WIA funding. The staff is fully integrated and mixed within the One-Stop Center and most are cross-trained so that they can provide a variety of labor exchange services for job seekers and employers. For example, several One-Stop staff rotate on a daily basis between staffing the reception desk (to greet job seekers and assess service needs as customers arrive at the One-Stop Center), assisting job seekers with taking advantage of a wide variety of core services available in the One-Stop Resource Room, conducting intake interviews and assessing client needs, providing one-on-one counseling and job search assistance, and running various workshops available to One-Stop customers. The WIA-funded staff person at the One-Stop Center is solely responsible for enrollment into WIA and providing WIA-funded intensive and training services.

Engaging and Serving Job Seekers at the One-Stop Center. The Harrisonburg One-Stop Career Center provided core services for over 6,000 job seekers the past program year. Although anyone can walk in and use services available through the resource room at the One-Stop Center, virtually all customers are first registered for the Employment Service prior to using the core services available in the Resource Room. For the program year ending in June 2006, a total of 6,210 customers utilizing the Harrisonburg One-Stop Center were registered for the Employment Service. Staff at the One-Stop indicate that, on an average day, about 50 to 60 customers utilize One-Stop core services (although the numbers can be much higher when the One-Stop Center sponsors recruitments for area firms). A comprehensive range of services are made available to job seekers directly or through referrals to other partnering agencies. The main services available on-site at the One-Stop Center are labor exchange services (both self-help and staff-assisted), help with obtaining Unemployment Insurance (UI), WIA intensive and training services, and GED preparation services.

Several of the key services available at the Harrisonburg One-Stop Center are briefly highlighted below:

- **Intake and Core Services.** When job seekers first come to the One-Stop Center, they are greeted by a receptionist who tries to determine specific needs of customers and guides the individual to using services within a designated Career Resource Room or to specific staff who can provide a one-on-one assessment, counseling, and referral to education, training, employment, and/or supportive services. The Resource Room is equipped with a variety of information and equipment necessary to conduct a thorough and successful job search. Highlights include computers with internet accessibility, O*NET, and word processing capabilities; resource manuals regarding all aspects of job searching including resume writing and interviewing skills; job search videos; faxing and phoning capabilities; printers; TDD machine; typewriter; message center; copier; resume development software; resume paper; current literature on career information and
community resources, telephone and business directories, and other supplies for use in a job search. Staff are available to assist those who are not computer literate or are new to using a computer in their job search.

Most customers of the One-Stop Center seek job search assistance. Job search assistance provided at the One-Stop Center may be offered individually or in groups. One-Stop Center staff can provide one-on-one counseling and assistance tailored to meet each customer’s needs. Job search assistance is also provided at the One-Stop Center through workshops focusing on topics of interest such as resume writing, filling out applications, conducting a successful job search, and interviewing. Helpful tips and information on agency support systems are available on brochures and handouts. Job search skill training is also available on video through the One-Stop Center. Information is available about resources through the “greeter,” through a calendar of events, and other written materials.

- **Intensive Services and Training.** A WIA staff person is located at the Harrison One-Stop Career Center to provide intensive and training services for One-Stop Customers meeting eligibility requirements under the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker Program (note: the LWIB contracts with other organizations for provision of WIA youth services). One-Stop customers interested in pursuing training meet with the WIA counselor to assess eligibility and need for education and training services. A total of 38 adults and 23 dislocated workers received ITAs (totaling about $45,000) in PY 2005. An ITA limit is set at $2,700 for each WIA participant. Just three months into the current program year, all WIA Adult and most WIA Dislocated Worker Program funding had already been obligated (as was the case the past program year). Most training supported under the WIA program is short-term – usually several months – and is provided by area community colleges or vocational technical institutions. In addition to WIA, the One-Stop Career Center partners with the local school system to offer GED preparation classes on-site each afternoon.

**Engaging and Serving Employers at the One-Stop Center.** The One-Stop Center places strong emphasis on providing services designed to meet the needs of individual employers. One-Stop administrators estimated that they serve about 300 each year. Although there are no special initiatives or funding available to partner with the employer community, the One-Stop Center provides a standard array of customized services for employers interested in listing jobs with the Job Service – for example, conducting visits to employers to obtain job listings; taking job orders from employers in-person, via the telephone, or by internet; and matching job seekers carefully to job openings. One-Stop staff work with employers to identify potential applicants and employ screening techniques to ensure that candidates match employer expectations. One-Stop staff have worked closely with large firms to facilitate hiring of workers to support opening or expanding of facilities – for example, during the past program year, the One-Stop Career Center served as the primary location where job seekers went to make application and be screened for 900 positions at a new WalMart distribution facility opening in the region.

**One-Stop Center Partnering.** As discussed above, the principal partners involved on-site at the One-Stop Center are VEC, WIA, and the local school system that provides a daily GED
preparation class at the Center. In addition, One-Stop Center staff maintain referral arrangements with many public and private organizations in the community providing support services. For example, Center staff have a “Quick Referral Guide to Human Services: Harrisonburg-Rockingham County” which provides contact information for over 100 local organizations providing a wide range of support services.

In terms of maintaining coordination with partnering organizations, the Harrisonburg One-Stop Center holds quarterly Network Facilitation Team meetings. Typically, these meetings are attended by representatives from VEC, WIA, the local schools, United Way, the local school district, the community colleges and several other training providers, the Chamber of Commerce, several area economic development agencies, the public library, and the Department of Rehabilitative Services. These quarterly meetings serve as forums for sharing information about each organization’s services in order to heighten awareness, enhance referral arrangements, and address service gaps and other problems that may arise.

IV. Challenges and Promising Practices

The Shenandoah Valley WIB and Harrisonburg One-Stop Center face several challenges to providing services and meeting the needs of job seekers and employers, including the following:

- **Lack of Funding to Establish Stronger Partnerships and Provide Services** – The chief problem faced by the LWIB and the One-Stop Center is lack of funding. WIA funding continues to shrink (both in actual and inflation-adjusted terms) as the cost of training and education increases and demands for enhancing worker skills increase by area employers. Within the area served, there has been erosion of higher paying jobs within the manufacturing sector accompanied by creation of jobs within the service sector (particularly retail, health care, and education). This shift has created a strong demand for re-training and upgrading of skills – yet the amount of funding through WIA that can be devoted to ITAs has decreased over the past few years. The WIA program in this LWIA has run out of funding for ITAs early in the year for its Adult Program over the past several program years.

- **Difficulties Getting Partners to Contribute Funding to Support One-Stop Operations.** The One-Stop Center has experienced difficulties in getting other partnering organization to commit to co-location and has had no success in obtaining funding from other organizations to offset costs of operating the One-Stop Center. All costs of operating the One-Stop Center are borne by VEC and WIA. While locating a GED preparation program at the Harrisonburg One-Stop has been of great benefit to the customers of the One-Stop Center and others in the community, the local school district does not have available funding to pay rental costs for space used. In the coming months, a Job Corps contractor is expected to co-locate recruitment staff at the One-Stop Center – and this will be the first organization (other that VEC and WIA) to share in the cost of operating the One-Stop Center. One-Stop administrators indicated that state-level funding would likely need to be made available by other state departments to support One-Stop operations locally, because local agencies are so strapped for funding.
• **Lack of Available Funding to Provide Incumbent Worker Training.** An important way for engaging employers in the workforce development system is to be able to provide training not only for unemployed job seekers but also for incumbent workers. While the state secured a waiver to allow LWIBs to use local formula funds for incumbent worker training, the overall low level of funding the WIB or One-Stop Center can bring to bear to fund incumbent worker training is an impediment for making progress on this front. The WIB has considered bringing on a grant writer to help with securing other sources of funding that could be devoted to incumbent worker training and other initiatives.

• **Complexities Involved in Merging the Operations of LWIBs IV and V, with Little Additional Funding.** One of the most vexing immediate challenges to the WIB concerns integrating One-Stop and other local operations for the newly-merged LWIBs. Despite adding four new counties and one city to the local WIB’s service area, the added resources are slight because the LWIB V is sparsely populated and has a low unemployment rate. In fact, at least for the short-term, the LWIB will have to administer the WIA program over the expanded service area, without additional staffing. In the coming months, a new One-Stop Center will be opened in Winchester and the workforce development operations in this newly-acquired area will shift to use the same service delivery model used in LWIB IV. This model relies heavily on contracting for services through a competitive RFP process.

The Shenandoah Valley WIB and Harrisonburg One-Stop Center feature several interesting and promising practices:

• **GED Preparation Class Offered at One-Stop Center.** The LWIB and One-Stop Center have been successful in partnering with the local school board to bring a GED instructor to the One-Stop Center to provide daily afternoon GED classes. This has expanded services available at the One-Stop Center for existing customers and also brought some new customers to the One-Stop who likely would not have otherwise been served. Also, with the increasing importance placed by employers within the growing services sector on foundational skills, the availability of remedial math and reading instruction at the One-Stop Center has been a valuable addition.

• **Strong and Continuing Linkages with Economic Development and Businesses.** The LWIB Director and One-Stop Director emphasized the need to keep abreast of local economic development activities – particularly as they may affect need for skilled workers and/or training to be provided by the LWIB. The LWIB Director has included several representatives of local economic development agencies on the board and frequently meets with representatives of these organizations to learn about employers planning to leave and coming to the area. In addition, the LWIB and One-Stop Center places substantial emphasis on tailoring services to meet the needs of local employers. This includes careful assessment and screening of job seekers for referral to job openings, providing training that is tailored to needs of employers (particularly in high growth
sectors such as health care and retail trade), and regularly soliciting views of employers on how the workforce development system could be improved.
MINI-ASSESSMENT OF ONE-STOP CAREER CENTER AND WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD (WIB) OPERATIONS – PIEDMONT WORKFORCE NETWORK (PWN) WORKFORCE INVESTMENT AREA (LWIA VI)

I. Introduction

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) authorizes funds to provide the employment and training services of various programs and organizations through a system of One-Stop Career Centers. These One-Stop Career Centers (referred to as Virginia Workforce Centers in the Commonwealth of Virginia) provide a range of employment, training, education and supportive services funded under WIA, Wagner-Peyser, and a variety of other programs. The programs and services provided through One-Stop Career Centers – and the public and private sector organizations delivering services – vary substantially across Centers and are intended to be tailored to the unique needs, environment, and characteristics of each locality. The Virginia Workforce Centers operate under the guidance of the Virginia Workforce Council and Workforce Investment Boards in sixteen Workforce Investment Areas across the Commonwealth.

This report is intended to highlight and assess local operations of the Piedmont Workforce Network (PWN) Workforce Investment Board (WIB), with a particular focus on operations of the full-service, certified One-Stop Career Center in Charlottesville. Report findings are based on a one-day site visit to interview administrators and staff at the PWN WIB and the Charlottesville One-Stop Career Center, supplemented by readily available documentation and data.

II. Local Workforce Investment Board (WIB) Service Area and Operations

Background. The PWN extends across the middle of the state and includes 11 counties (Albemarle, Culpeper, Fauquier, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa, Madison, Nelson, Orange, Rappahannock) and the city of Charlottesville. With a total of about 334,000 residents, the
largest areas are Albemarle County (84,000) and Fauquier County (55,000), followed by the city of Charlottesville (41,000). The area surrounding Charlottesville is entirely rural. In Program Year (PY) 2005, the One-Stop Centers received over 16,000 visits in total. The PWN area has a strong economy and a diverse economic base. The region as a whole has consistently had an unemployment rate below the state average for several years; in September 2006, the unemployment rate was 2.5 percent, and the County of Albemarle had the second lowest unemployment rate in the state. The largest industrial sectors are education, retail trade, health care, manufacturing, construction, and hospitality. However, the area is shifting predominantly toward the services and retail industry – specifically in health care and education. By implication, this shift is exerting downward pressure on wages.

**WIB Staffing and Operations.** The PWN WIB is comprised of 34 members. The WIB office is located in the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission office in Charlottesville, near the One-Stop Career Center visited for this study. The Board has a staff of three: an Executive Director; a three-quarters time Program Coordinator responsible for One-Stop Center operations, including providing technical assistance, and monitoring compliance and performance data; and a half-time Administrative Assistant.

The PWN workforce system has undergone extensive structural changes in the last year, including changes in its core partners and staff fluctuations. Until June 30, 2005, WIA One-Stop operations were run by a Consortium of five partners that was led by Piedmont Virginia Community College and included the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC), the Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS), the Albemarle County Department of Social Services (DSS), and the Monticello Community Action Agency (MACAA). The multi-agency Operator Consortium posed significant challenges as the agencies, organizations, and One-Stop leaders could not agree on system priorities, service delivery approach, or future direction.

The area has recently changed to a unique dual One-Stop operator structure whereby one of the One-Stop centers is operated by consortium and the other is operated by a single entity selected by a competitive bid process. The One-Stop Center in Culpeper is operated by a consortium team that includes Rappahannock County Department of Social Services, Germanna Community College, Lord Fairfax Community College, Regional Adult Education, Fauquier Career Resource Center, Madison County Department of Social Services, the VEC, and the Culpeper Department of Human Services (DHS), with the Culpeper DHS as the lead One-Stop Operator. The One-Stop Center in Charlottesville is operated separately by the Culpeper Department of Human Services (DHS), and operated out of the VEC facility in Charlottesvile per an MOU agreement with the VEC. There was widespread agreement among the WIB and Charlottesville center staff that the change to a single entity Operator for Charlottesville has led to improvements for both the higher-level operations of the workforce system as well as One-Stop operations and service delivery capacity. The Culpeper DHS agency’s approach, which emphasizes a customer service orientation and a more grounded, experienced approach to serving customer needs, is said to be more closely aligned with that of the One-Stop Center’s.

Because it covers such a large area, the area has service delivery offices in many different communities. There are two full-service One-Stop Centers in LWIA VI – the Charlottesville One-Stop Center and the Culpeper Career Resource Center. There are also three satellite centers.
located in Fauquier, Culpeper and Albemarle Counties, and six information centers located in Greene, Madison, Rappahannock, Nelson, Louis and Fluvanna Counties.

**WIB Funding.** The PWN WIB had a budget of approximately $990,000 for PY 2005. The budget is based almost entirely (90 percent) on WIA formula funds. Approximately 22 percent ($217,000) of the budget is comprised of money from previous years. The WIB allocations for 2005 were highest for the Dislocated Worker Program at $295,000, followed by $207,000 and $177,000 for the Youth and Adult Programs respectively. Spending on service delivery at the two comprehensive One-Stop Centers comprises 70 percent of expenditures; another 15 percent is dedicated to WIA Youth Program services, and WIB operations take up most of the remaining amount. The WIB also obtained a grant from the Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP). The SCSEP grant is not extended into the current program year. Additional funds come from a Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) grant and a small WIA incentive grant. WIA funds declined only slightly (5 percent) for PY 2006. In 2005, the WIB successfully appealed to several local counties to help supplement the workforce system budget; as a result the WIB received a direct cash contribution totaling $33,000 from the County of Albemarle and City of Charlottesville.

**WIB Partnering.** The WIB has strong linkages with the Culpeper Department of Human Services, local VEC agencies, and the for-profit and non-profit community-based organizations that operate satellite offices. The partnership with the VEC allows each entity to leverage each other’s resource to expand and enhance their respective required services. VEC staff operate the Centers’ resource rooms and provide a full set of core services for One-Stop customers. TEENSIGHT, a community-based organization, operates the WIA Youth Program services for the entire area. Aside from the service providers, the workforce system has found it consistently difficult to obtain cash contributions or establish other forms of tangible resource sharing with other area groups. Not only do these organizations face their own budget constraints, but the concept of providing financial contributions to help offset the One-Stops’ operating costs was met with even greater resistance due to the internal friction between the Operating Consortium. Partners. Most of the partnerships that enhance on-site service delivery for customers are established at the local level. The direct cash grant that the WIB was able to obtain from Albemarle County and the Charlottesville represents a new development, which holds promise for future partnership building and resource-sharing.

### III. Charlottesville One-Stop Center Operations

**Background.** The Charlottesville One-Stop Center offers WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker services for Charlottesville and the surrounding area, in addition to the full range of VEC labor exchange services. Of the approximately 16,300 total visitors served during PY 2005, one-third of these were served at the Charlottesville One-Stop Center. WIA Dislocated Worker and Adult services have been provided at the VEC field office in Charlottesville since 2000. It is centrally located for the area it serves and displays a prominent “Virginia Workforce Network” sign outside. The VEC rents office space to the DHS WIA staff and charges for use of some administrative resources. A major challenge to accessing workforce services in the region is the lack of public transportation, particularly for customers in the outlying communities.
**One-Stop Center Funding.** The WIA contract for One-Stop Center services in Charlottesville is $224,000 (higher than for any other service location). Through the MOU agreement with the VEC, the WIA contract leverages core-level customer services contributed by the VEC, including equipment and staff to guide customers through self-directed services. The facility also has a classroom, conference room, and a room available for partner activities. WIA funds pay for the salaries of four staff that exclusively assist potential or enrolled WIA customers, as well as for rent and use of equipment and materials, supportive services to registered customers, and other minor costs. The One-Stop Center does not offer any fee for services.

**One-Stop Center Staffing.** The Charlottesville One-Stop Center has 21 staff in total; almost all of these staff are VEC employees. Many VEC and a few partner staff are involved in the provision of core-level services. A front desk greeter and five Workforce Service Representatives perform many functions, including core services in the Resource Area, initial one-on-one screening of client needs, and referrals to VEC services or WIA staff. They also assist clients with their job search, provide assistance with resume preparation and other work-related documents, help clients with VEC services such as online filing for Unemployment Insurance, and provide job matching services.

There are four WIA-funded staff: two full-time Case Managers responsible for intensive-level services; a Client Services Specialist; and a WIA Program Manager who conducts intake, enrollment, and assessment, and refers customers to education and training providers. A WIA Adult and Dislocated Program Supervisor is located at the Culpeper One-Stop Center but oversees WIA staff at all the service locations. Although WIA staff perform some job matching, they primarily rely on a VEC job developer to do so. As a VEC employee, the Job Developer has the advantage of being permitted access to the agency’s internal database, an important source of data not available to WIA staff. Several staff reported that they and their colleagues are knowledgeable about the many programs and services offered at the One-Stop Center, and that staff referrals to the WIA program and other services are appropriate.

WIA Case Managers have caseloads of between 40 and 50 enrolled clients, in addition to meeting with potential clients and following up with program exiters. Case Managers reported that they found the size of the caseload challenging and that, even with assistance from the Client Services Specialist and WIA Program Manager, the heavy workloads at times prevented them from spending as much time as they would like working one-on-one with clients, especially those that have multiple barriers to work and may need extra attention.

**Engaging and Serving Job Seekers at the One-Stop Center.** Most customers who visit the One-Stop Center seek VEC-related services and subsequently are referred by VEC staff to WIA services on-site. The majority of customers are walk-ins, although WIA staff said they sometimes receive referrals from the DSS and local community-based organizations. The main services available on-site are labor exchange services (both self-help and staff-assisted), help with obtaining Unemployment Insurance (UI), and WIA core and intensive and training services.

Staff at all levels noted increased cooperation among One-Stop Center staff and progress in terms of service integration. This appears to have resulted from a closer partnership between the
One-Stop operator and a change in leadership within the VEC agency. The new VEC Manager was described as possessing a collaborative leadership style. A number of new One-Stop Center policies and processes have reportedly improved communication and exchange of information among One-Stop staff. For example, WIA staff now participate in VEC staff meetings, whereas this was not the previously the case. Improved communication and information exchange has also led to more frequent customer referrals to on-site program services. There has been little change with respect to integrating paperwork requirements between the two systems (VEC and WIA). Leadership staff said this is more difficult to accomplish given the different policies, management structures and reporting requirements of both programs.

An area of consensus among staff is the lack of usefulness of the state’s performance management system, the Virginia Workforce Network (VWN) Information System. Staff said that the system was cumbersome to use. Data entry requires considerable staff time and does not provide access to information in formats that allow staff and management to track their performance internally. There is also considerable duplication of paperwork that results from regularly tracking information manually and subsequently entering it into the database. WIB staff emphasized that this creates inefficiency throughout the system by taking up more staff time and resources that could otherwise be dedicated to direct client services.

Several of the key services available at the Charlottesville One-Stop Center are briefly highlighted below:

- **Intake and Core Services.** A front desk clerk greets customers as they come into the One-Stop Center and first-time visitors are guided through the multiple services offered at the Center. Most customers fill out a form that collects basic demographic information and asks about the purpose of the visit. This form is passed onto the Workforce Service Representative who conducts the initial screening to determine whether a customer needs referrals to other supports, personalized job search assistance, or is capable of conducting a self-directed search in the Resource Area. The Representative automatically registers most customers with the VEC Employment Service to assist them with their job search. Workforce Service Representatives also offer assistance in the Resource Area to customers using core-level services.

The Resource Area is equipped with a variety of information and equipment necessary to conduct a thorough job search. Highlights include several computers with internet accessibility, access to the ALEX job search site, online Unemployment Insurance claims filing, and word processing capabilities; resource manuals regarding all aspects of job searching, including resume writing and interviewing skills; job search videos; fax machines and telephones; printers; TDD machine; copier; resume development software; current literature on career information and partner and community resources; telephone and business directories; and other supplies for use in a job search. The One-Stop Center also offers a few on-site classes and workshops and scheduled visits from partner agencies and organizations. An interview room is available on the third level for employers to meet with job applicants.
• **Intensive Services and Training**. Customers who have used core services for at least 30 days but have not been successful with their job search and customers identified as having multiple barriers to work are referred to the WIA Adult Case Managers. A major focus for WIA service delivery is improving the quality and range of services customers receive at the intensive level. Staff also reported a de-emphasis on the use of ITAs; instead they take measures to reserve those funds for the most hard-to-serve or customers who have not transitioned into job-readiness through other means of direct assistance. Staff that are implementing services with the relatively new emphasis on intensive level assistance, however, would be well supported by an adequate increase in guidance, resources and training towards meeting the area’s goals.

Historically, the vast majority of WIA enrolled customers received financial support for training. Declining WIA funding has become the major constraint on client access to education or training; One-Stop staff relayed that the budget for ITAs has declined in each of the last few years and they expect will likely continue to be reduced in the coming year. An ITA limit is set at about $3,500 for each WIA participant. Staff said there are an adequate number of training providers in the area. Customers are most often enrolled in a local community college or vocational-technical school. The cuts in WIA funds over the years have led to year-end waiting lists once the budget has reached its limit.

**Engaging and Serving Employers at the One-Stop Center.** Although there are no special initiatives or set-aside funding available to partner with the employer community, the One-Stop provides a standard array of customized services for employers interested in listing jobs with the Job Service. Services include taking job orders from employers in-person, via the telephone, or by internet and matching job seekers to job openings. There was consensus among staff interviewed that the local workforce system could be more proactive in reaching out to the employer community. Aside from the Job Service, there was not yet tangible evidence of marketing or enhancing employer services. Most efforts of this nature were in the planning stages. The WIB planned to use a portion of a WIA incentive grant for just this purpose. Since the site visit, the WIB has developed a website that prominently features the range of employer services offered through the workforce system.

**One-Stop Center Partnering.** The Charlottesville One-Stop Center has established partnerships with several required mandated partners and some non-mandatory partners. The strongest partnership is between the VEC and Culpeper Department of Human Service, the One-Stop operator. Most of the other partnerships involve in-kind services. The Department of Rehabilitative Services provides a Disability Navigator. The Adult Education Program conducts weekly GED classes and/or testing on-site. Job Corps visits the One-Stop Center on a scheduled basis to meet with referred customers. Experience Works, a Senior Community Service Employment program operator, is the only full-time, co-located partner. One-Stop Center direct service staff highlighted the need for a closer partnership with the local Department of Social Services and other agencies and organizations that can provide classes and workshops and work supports. WIB staff said that two Economic Development representatives sit on the Board but it did not appear that that their representation on the WIB had promoted increased coordination or
collaboration between the two systems in ways that were evident at the local service delivery level.

IV. Challenges and Interesting/Promising Practices

The PWN WIB and Charlottesville One-Stop Center faced several challenges to providing services and meeting the needs of job seekers and employers, including the following:

- **One-Stop Staff Are Challenged by an Increased Focus on Intensive Services And Would Be Well Served by More Adequate Resources.** As a strategy for dealing with budget constraints, One-Stop Center staff are focusing on the provision of intensive services. However, staff are challenged to successfully implement this new approach, at least at this early stage, because of the relative lack of partnerships with other agencies that would facilitate leveraging resources. Staff suggested that a natural way to build on partnerships already created is to develop linkages between One-Stop service delivery staff and Board members and their organizations. Aside from education and training, many customers are likely to benefit from a variety of skills-building workshops to increase their work-readiness, few of which area available currently at the One-Stop Center.

- **Difficulties Developing Partnerships to Enhance Customer Resources.** Although the Charlottesville One-Stop Center maintains a number of partnerships with area agencies and organizations, it has experienced difficulties in getting other partnering organization to provide even in-kind services at the One-Stop Center, commit to co-location, or obtain funding from other organizations to offset operating costs. Very few agencies have a regular or scheduled presence at the Center, and the Center lacks on-site classes or workshops.

- **Staffing Capacity is Stretched.** WIA Case Managers are challenged to provide enhanced intensive services due to funding constraints and heavy caseloads. This is perceived to negatively impact customer service in terms of limiting the amount of one-on-one time and attention that could be given to clients in need of intensive services — especially those with multiple barriers that may need more attention to successfully transition into work.

- **Difficulty Using the VWN Data System/Lack of Timely and Reliable Performance Data.** Staff reported that an area of continuous difficulty is the lack of and usefulness of the state’s performance management system, the Virginia Workforce Network (VWN). They explained that they would like to be able to use the database to assess their progress towards meeting performance standards throughout the year. More specifically, the One-Stop Center would like to be able to view case records and query specific information in the system, instead of duplicating much of the same data collection and entry through an internal manual system.
The PWN WIB and Charlottesville One-Stop Center has several interesting and promising features:

- **Management Changes Have Improved Staff Integration and Referrals.** The adoption of a single One-Stop Operator and a change in leadership within the VEC agency has led to increased cooperation among One-Stop Center staff and progress in terms of staff integration. A number of new One-Stop Center policies and processes have reportedly improved communication and exchange of information among One-Stop staff. For example, WIA staff now participate in VEC staff meetings, whereas this was not previously the case. Improved communication and information exchange has also led to more frequent customer referrals to on-site program services.

- ** Expanded Funding through Local Government Support.** In 2005, the WIB successfully appealed to several localities to help supplement the workforce system budget; as a result the WIB received a direct cash contribution totaling $33,000 from the County of Albemarle and City of Charlottesville. The direct cash grant from two counties represents a new development that holds promise for future partnership building and resource-sharing.
I. Introduction

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) authorizes funds to provide the employment and training services of various programs and organizations through a system of One-Stop Career Centers. These One-Stop Career Centers (referred to as Virginia Workforce Centers in the Commonwealth of Virginia) provide a range of employment, training, education and supportive services funded under WIA, Wagner-Peyser, and a variety of other programs. The programs and services provided through One-Stop Career Centers – and the public and private sector organizations delivering services – vary substantially across Centers and are meant to be tailored to the unique needs, environment, and characteristics of each locality. The Virginia Workforce Centers operate under the guidance of the Virginia Workforce Council and Workforce Investment Boards in sixteen Workforce Investment Areas across the Commonwealth.

This report is intended to highlight and assess local operations of the Region 2000 Workforce Investment Board (WIB), with a particular focus on operations of the full-service, certified One-Stop Career Center in Lynchburg. Report findings are based on a one-day site visit in October 2006 to interview the administrators and staff of the Region 2000 WIB and its full-service Region 2000 One-Stop Career Center, supplemented by readily available documentation and data.

II. Local Workforce Investment Board (WIB) Service Area and Operations

Background. The Region 2000 Workforce Investment Board’s administrative offices are located in Lynchburg, Virginia. The WIB covers 2000 square miles in the Central Virginia area, including four counties and two cities (see table above). The region’s economic base is manufacturing and the area has one of the highest proportions of people employed (over 20
percent) in manufacturing in the state. The region includes over 200 manufacturers (e.g., plastics, wireless communications equipment, materials handling equipment), two large nuclear firms, and five colleges and universities.

The area served has experienced economic growth in recent years. For example, the local economy has enjoyed rapid job growth (5,000 new jobs in the past two years and a very low unemployment rate of 3.1 percent). At least 5,000 jobs are expected to come to the region in the next five years. At the same time, the region is losing population in the 18 to 24 age group, increasing the average age of the workforce. Although there are many educational institutions in the region, the majority of college bound high school graduates do not return to the region and those attending higher education institutions tend to leave after graduation. Because jobs are plentiful, there is less demand or interest in training among job seekers. At the same time, many employers in the region are in need of a higher skilled workforce to fill jobs.

**WIB Staffing and Operations.** The Child Local Elected Officials (CLEOs) of the member localities on the Region 2000 Commission serve as the LWIA VII grant recipient and fiscal agent. The Region 2000 Workforce Investment Board is comprised of 47 members and is staffed by the WIB Director and an administrative assistant. In an effort to diversify its funding base and strengthen ties with employers, the WIB pays for a portion of the salaries of two positions that are shared with the Local Government Council, a Grant Writer and a Business Contact/Outreach staff person.

**WIB Funding.** The WIA allocation for Program Year (PY) 2006 was $918,925, about 20 percent less than PY 2005. The WIB also has a substantial amount of carry-over WIA funding from the previous Program Year; about 40 percent of its WIA allocation ($626,000) from PY 2005 carried over into PY 2006. In December 2005, the WIB received an additional $30,000 in incentive funds for showing the greatest improvement on performance measures in the state. In general, funding was not an area of concern for the WIB and Career Center, although there are ongoing efforts to conserve costs where possible. For example, the Career Center has successfully negotiated lower CNA training fees with some of training providers and restricts access to the fax and copier machines in its resource area.

**WIB Partnering.** The role and activities of the WIB in LWIA VII are marked by a high level of integration with other regionally based entities that have joined together to form the Region 2000 Partnership. This collaborative enterprise serves as a focal point for regional planning and coordinating regional services to improve the quality of life in the area. The four partners are the Economic Development Council, the Local Government Council, Technology Council and the Workforce Investment Board. Plans are underway to include a fifth partner—The Young Professionals of Central Virginia — an organization with members ages 20-35 that seeks to address the current workforce challenge of an aging workforce by attracting and retaining skilled young workers in the region. The Region 2000 Partnership has a strong regional identity that builds on a long history of relationships and partnering in which all the key players are geographically aligned. Other key entities, such as the community colleges, share the same geographic alignment. The Region 2000 Partnership has its own coordinated and shared strategic vision plan that sets overarching goals, a single “brand,” and a single website with a shared portal with a coordinated appearance that links to each of the partner websites. To further
promote communication, coordination and the branding as a single entity, the four partners have agreed to co-locate administrative staff in a new location and share the costs of rent. It is anticipated that this move will occur in early 2007 and that the relationship will become formalized over time.

In addition to its integral position within the Region 2000 Partnership, the WIB has particularly strong linkages with the Central Virginia Community College (CVCC, the lead One-Stop consortium operator) and the Virginia Department of Business Assistance (VDBA). The WIB has successfully implemented a few different cost-sharing arrangements with VDBA; for example, the WIB/Career Center supported recruitment efforts for a customized training program funded by the VDBA.

II. Region 2000 One-Stop Career Center Operations

**Background.** The Region 2000 Career Center is the only full-service, certified One-Stop Center for LWIA VII. It is a stand-alone Career Center located in a shopping plaza and on a bus line hub. The nearly 10,000 square foot area includes a large resource room, a computer lab, two meeting rooms, and ample space for Career Center and partner staff. The Regional Career Center has 14 partners that are organized as an Operating Consortium with CVCC serving as the Lead Partner for the Consortium. The Region 2000 Career Center opened in March 2003. There are also four satellite centers that function as information kiosks in Bedford, Brookneal, Appomattox, and Amherst. In addition to these physical sites, the WIB allocated resources to support the design of a web-based virtual One-Stop Center that aimed to incorporate all the same services as the physical One-Stop facility (e.g., search jobs, research careers, take assessments) on a self-serve basis. The need for such a website has diminished since the inception of this service in light of the proliferation of other similar on-line websites. Therefore, the WIB continues to operate the existing website but has opted to no longer allocate funding for any further updating or enhancements.

**One-Stop Center Funding.** WIA funds cover virtually all of the costs associated with operating the Career Center in Lynchburg, although partners provide in-kind contributions in the form of staff time spent on-site. In addition, the Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) recently provided the Career Center with free assistive technology equipment. For PY 2006, the WIB used $454,500 to cover the operating costs of the Career Center, including the cost of the staff located at the Region 2000 Career Center. To date, the Region 2000 Career Center has not experienced budget difficulties. It is likely that costs associated with operating the Career Center, still a relatively new service delivery entity, could grow as the Career Center continues to build on and expand services for job seekers and employers.

Plans to charge a nominal amount of rent for the two organizations that are (or will be) permanently housed in the Career Center — the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Center and the Senior Community Service Employment Program (recently contracted to Goodwill Industries) are currently being finalized. Beyond this relatively small contribution, partner organizations currently provide no funding to offset the costs of operating the One-Stop Center. There is no expectation that partner staff will make a financial contribution to support One-Stop
Center operations in the future. The Career Center does not provide fee-for-service activities to fund its operations.

**One-Stop Center Staffing.** The partners of the Region 2000 Career Center are organized as an Operating Consortium. The lead partner organization for the Consortium is the CVCC. WIA funds are used to support five full-time and one part-time Career Center staff (all of whom are CVCC employees) and 80 percent of the salary of a Career Center staff person employed by the region’s community action organization. The Career Center is staffed by a Career Center Manager, an Assistant Manager, two WIA case managers, a part-time front desk person and a full-time administrative assistant (who can staff the front-desk when needed). The Career Center has only recently attained this level of staff. When the Career Center first opened in 2003, there were only two full-time staff and some partner presence. In the past year, two new WIA case managers were hired and the receptionist transitioned from volunteer to part-time wage worker. It was also noted that there has been a learning curve for staff to carry out all the practices and procedures required under WIA and gain the capacity needed to handle Virginia Workforce Network (VWN) data requirements and data management. While acknowledging that a lack of adequate staff experience and capacity created operational challenges during the initial start-up and early implementation of the Career Center, there was general optimism that the current staff level and configuration sufficiently enabled the Career Center to fulfill its various responsibilities under WIA.

**Engaging and Serving Job Seekers at the One-Stop Center.** The Region 2000 One-Stop Career Center had 4,749 visits during the past program year. The One-Stop does not keep an unduplicated count of customers using core services. Staff estimated that on an average day about 15-35 customers utilize the One-Stop for core services. The Career Center offers job seekers a range of services either directly or through referrals to other partnering agencies. These are briefly highlighted below:

- **Intake and Core Services.** When job seekers first come to the Career Center, they are greeted by a receptionist who asks them to sign in and fill out a short in-house form that provides basic contact information, education status, and asks about their interest in obtaining a GED. This information is entered into an in-house database. Information packets are available that provide a brief overview of the core services provided in the Career Center and the steps required for those seeking education and training assistance. Customers that are not registered with the VEC are given the packet of paperwork necessary for in-person registration at the VEC and also told about the new option to self-register through the VEC website.

Most customers of the Career Center are seeking job search assistance. The career resource room and other core services are designed to be self-directed, although the receptionist can assist those who are unfamiliar with the resources available, answer questions, and provide referrals. The front lobby is a spacious area that is equipped with a telephone for local calls and four dedicated job search computer stations with internet accessibility to several job listing websites (e.g., Monster, VEC-ALEX, local newspapers). Information from these sites are also downloaded on a regular basis and made available in hard copy for those not comfortable with using computers. In addition,
local and state government applications and job postings are displayed as well as hard copy information on job search tips, local area job search sites and local area employment agencies by the type of work they cover and their felony policy. Information about available community resources (e.g., child care assistance, free computer classes, adult literacy and GED preparation classes, emergency assistance) is also displayed.

The Region 2000 Career Center’s core services also include a separate Computer Lab adjacent to the main resource area with seven computers available on a strictly self-serve basis for resume and cover letter preparation and for use of Windows and keyboarding tutorial software. O*Net is available on all the computers and one computer is reserved for Career Scope Assessment. Compass/ESL Standard Assessment is also available for $6.00 to those accessing core services. Copying of resumes and faxing is performed by the staff in the Business Service Area, located in a separate area not accessible to the public in order to conserve costs and ensure that the equipment is being used for job related purposes. In another part of the Career Center, five “professional development” cubicles are set aside where job-seekers can access telephones with long-distance capacity and work on their job search with no time restrictions. DRS recently equipped a cubicle in the Career Center with a variety of different assertive technology at no cost to the Center, although no customer has yet to use the equipment and staff have not been trained to assist customers with it.

- **Intensive Services and Training.** The Region 2000 Career Center uses several kinds of assessment tools: TABE, O*net, Interest Inventory, Compass/ESL Standard, CareerScope and Work Keys. WIA funds have been used to purchase the Career Scope and the TABE assessment tools and, for this reason, the Career Center limits its use to only those who are pursuing WIA training assistance. CVCC makes Work Keys available free of charge to Career Center customers but customers must go to the community college site for the testing. Career Scope and TABE testing is also available at other organizations, such as New Land Jobs and the Department of Social Services, and customers are given the choice of participating in the assessment on- or off-site.

To receive WIA intensive services, participants must also be enrolled in training. Individuals not seeking training but still in need of more assisted job search services – such as help with resume writing, filling out applications, and job readiness skills – are typically referred to New Land Jobs, a key community-based partner organization that has a well-established reputation and is located nearby. A New Land Jobs staff person is also located on-site for a half-day, once a week. New Lands Jobs services includes free job search services such as a job search preparation workshop, individual case management and career planning, resume preparation assistance, weekly interview practice workshops, career aptitude assessment testing, barrier identification and resolution, and a Clerical Support Training and Enrichment Program. Because New Land Jobs offers these services at no charge and is such a close partner, it was determined that offering similar services at the Career Center would be duplicative and an inefficient use of resources.
In order to conserve costs and meet performance standards, the Career Center has developed a multi-step WIA training assistance eligibility process. The first step is a mandatory Career Center Orientation that is held on a weekly basis and provides an overview of the entire range of services available through the Career Center. Upon completion of the orientation, unemployed individuals interested in training are scheduled for an on-site Job Success Workshop, also held on a weekly basis and conducted by a DSS employee. Once the customer has completed these two group sessions (employed individuals are not required to attend the job search workshop), they are given an Initial Assessment Form that can be filled out immediately or filled out at home and returned at a later date. Once the forms are completed and returned, the customer is scheduled for an initial eligibility review appointment with a WIA case manager and provided a brief career counseling session.

If the individual appears eligible for WIA training assistance, they are given the full application to complete and informed about supporting documentation that must be provided in order to continue the process. Those that return the application are scheduled to meet with the WIA case manager for an Application Packet Review meeting where the case manager reviews all the documentation for eligibility determination purposes and spends a bit more time discussing career paths. After this meeting, the WIA counselor will then make a final determination of eligibility. Those eligible receive a letter and instruction on next steps. The TABE assessment and Career Scope assessment is required. Depending on what kind of training they are interested in, other assessments such as Work Keys may be required. Once all required assessments are completed, there is a longer meeting with the WIA case manager regarding the training opportunities available to them, career paths and interests, and barriers that might affect the successful completion of training. Those interested in pursuing training at this point will be registered and an Individual Employment Plan (IEP) will be developed. This process takes about 45 days and is intended to ensure that the people who are enrolled in training are extremely invested in participating and have a high likelihood of successfully completing the training activity they have selected.

There are currently 120 individuals enrolled in training. The predominant form of training is classroom based, although the WIB and Career Center staff both noted that conducting more customized training and OJTs was an ongoing goal. The Career Center recently conducted the recruitment assessment and screening for a local company (M/A-COM) for a customized training initiative and has supported 34 OJTs since opening in 2003. CNA and Medical Technician training (offered by several providers in the region) are very popular. ITA limits are set at $7,000 for job seekers entering non-nursing training programs and $10,000 for those entering CNA programs or CNAs returning for their LPN or RN. The region has not experienced a shortage of ITA funds and, in fact, would like to ramp up the number of individuals enrolled in WIA training. Customers that indicate on the basic information form provided when they first sign-in that they lack a high school diploma or GED are told about and, if interested, given a referral for adult basic education and GED preparation classes available in the community.
Customers that need additional services can see partners that are located on site (partners are typically on-site once a week for a few hours) or choose to go to the partner site. The Career Center has developed a WIA referral form for use by community service and partner agencies when referring their clients to the Career Center as well as a generic referral form and some tailored referral forms for Career Center customers that are referred to other partners for services. The region’s community action agency, LYN-CAG, provides the Career Center bus tokens for customers who need transportation assistance. This is provided at no cost to the Career Center and is considered a valuable contribution since there are a high number of bus-users. The supportive services policy was recently revised with more limitations in response to the perception that it was being overused with insufficient oversight. The Career Center also began tracking referrals made to community service and partner agencies in May 2006.

Engaging and Serving Employers at the One-Stop Center. Both the Career Center and the WIB place high priority on providing services designed to meet the needs of employers in the region, a focus that is both reflected in, and further strengthened by, the WIB’s key role in the Region 2000 Partnership. The WIB/Local Government Council’s business contact person, the Region 2000 Career Center Manager and a regionally based staff person from the Virginia Department of Business Assistance function as an employer services team. According to data collected by the Region 2000 Career Center, the Career Center made 152 “employer assists” in PY2005-2006, which included activities such as job fairs and screenings, providing meeting space, and marketing/outreach meetings with employers.

Highlights of employer-oriented services and activities include:

- Future Focus Expo ’06, a job fair with five of the largest regional employers sponsored by the Region 2000 partnership in which both the WIB and the Region 2000 Career Center played a key role, took place in October 2006;
- Access to a web-enabled database (Jobs-EQ®) that provides regional information on key economic and workforce development indicators. The economic development agency has also purchased a “seat” to this subscription. The need for this information was driven, in part, by the fact that VEC labor market information is not readily available to the WIB. The purchase of this database was supported through the special incentive award for improved performance received in December 2006;
- Creation of a new Region 2000 jobs website portal that serves as an employer service and an employer-marketing tool. The website, which has the Region 2000 branding, allows employers a link to list their website at no cost so that job seekers can search by industry cluster and directly link to their website. This Region 2000 jobs portal also directly links job seekers to the VEC-ALEX job listing data;
- Development of a CD targeted to those interested in starting a business in VA that provides basic information about the requirements involved in starting up a business.
- Annual Regional Career Fairs and individual employer job fairs are held at the Region 2000 Career Center; and,
- In partnership with DRS, the Region 2000 Partnership acts as an umbrella for the Region 2000 Area Network for Employment (RANE), one of 21 Workforce Networks administered by DRS that brings together employers and workforce agencies to increase...
awareness and hiring of persons with disabilities. On behalf of RANE, the WIB recently sponsored an employer recognition lunch.

One-Stop Center Partnering. The Career Center has strong relationships with several community partner organizations, many of which make up the Operating Consortium. Monthly meetings are held by Operating Consortium to facilitate communication and coordination. In addition to serving as the lead partner of the Career Center Operating Consortium, CVCC has its own Center for Workforce Development and a CVCC staff person is on-site at the Career Center once a week for four hours. The Alliance for Children and Families is contracted to provide WIA Youth Services and, as noted previously, an employee of LYN-CAG is almost entirely supported through WIA funds and this staff person is on-site full-time.

Several other community partners have a regularly scheduled staff person on-site, typically for just a few hours per week. These include DRS, Job Corps, DSS (which also conducts the weekly Job Search Success workshop), New Land Jobs, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (which houses its service center at the Career Center). Goodwill Industries, the new Title V provider, is planning to house its Senior Employment Program at the Career Center. It was noted by staff that the public housing authority regularly refers individuals to the One-Stop to attend the job search workshop and use the resource room and that DSS routinely refers its TANF VIEW clients to use the resource rooms and utilize the computer lab room. The Department of Corrections probation department also routinely refers parolees to the Career Center to use their core services and attend the Job Success Workshop. This partnership is facilitated by LYN-CAG, which operates VA Cares in the region, a pre-and post-release services program for offenders. The Career Center has not developed the same level of partnership with VEC as it has achieved with the other partners noted above. There is no on-site VEC presence at the Career Center, a result of the VEC experiencing budget cutbacks and staffing constraints. In addition, it was noted that data access restrictions to VEC stored data made it much more difficult and time-consuming for Career Center staff to determine WIA eligibility.

IV. Challenges and Interesting/Promising Practices

The Region 2000 WIB and Region 2000 Career Center face several challenges to providing services and meeting the needs of job seekers and employers, including the following:

- **Lack of Engagement by Local VEC in One-Stop Operations.** The local VEC office runs its operation apart from the One-Stop Center, in a separate office some distance from the One-Stop. Staffing cutbacks at the VEC has meant that there is no outstationing of VEC staff in the Career Center. As a result of this limited involvement, the One-Stop Center has not been able to leverage additional resources from Wagner-Peyser funding, and there is a lack of coordination and potentially some duplication of job search services between the VEC local office and the One-Stop Career Center.

- **Difficulties with the VWN and Data Access.** Staff reported that an area of continuous difficulty is the cumbersome and complicated requirements of the state’s performance management system, the Virginia Workforce Network (VWN). In addition, data access
restrictions to VEC stored data has made it much more difficult and time-consuming for Career Center staff to pull together the information needed to determine WIA eligibility. Even though the Career Center is certified by the state as fulfilling all the requirements necessary to be a comprehensive full-service center, it does not have the same level of access to certain data available to Career Centers operated by VECs.

- **Staffing Capacity is Stretched.** While the number of staff has expanded since opening in 2003 (there are now 5 full-time and 1 part-time staff), the level of staff is minimal relative to the wide and diverse range of activities that are required to operate a One-Stop Center and administer WIA programs. For example, the reception area is staffed by one part-time worker with back-up provided by other staff. The Manager is responsible for overall management, but also bears primary responsibility for employer outreach. It was also noted that there had been a significant learning curve for staff to carry out all the practices and procedures required under WIA and gain the capacity needed to handle VWN data requirements and data management. While acknowledging that a lack of adequate staff experience and capacity created operational challenges during the initial start-up and early implementation of the Career Center, there was general optimism that the current staff level and configuration sufficiently enabled the Career Center to fulfill its various responsibilities under WIA. If the Career Center activities continue to follow the current trend of serving more job seekers and employers, additional staff will likely be needed.

- **Multi-Step Eligibility Process May Unduly Restrict Access to Training.** In order to conserve costs and meet performance standards, the Career Center has developed a multi-step WIA training assistance eligibility process that requires customers to complete several discrete steps and typically takes 45 days to complete. The eligibility process includes attendance at two group sessions, three in-person meetings with a WIA case manager, and required assessment testing. While the ultimate goal of this process is to ensure that those who are enrolled in training are extremely vested in participating and a higher likelihood of successful completion, it may also deter otherwise eligible individuals from enrolling in and benefit from WIA training assistance. Given that the region has not experienced a shortfall in funding available for training, consideration of the pros and cons of streamlining the process by which eligibility is determined might be beneficial.

The Region 2000 WIB and Career Center also featured several interesting and promising practices, including the following:

- **Strong Regional Focus and Partnerships, Especially Between Workforce Development and Economic Development Systems.** The role and activities of the WIB in LWIA VII are marked by a high level of integration with other regionally based entities that have joined together to form the Region 2000 Partnership. This collaborative enterprise serves as a focal point for regional planning and coordinating regional services to improve the quality of life in the area. The four partners are the Economic Development Council, the Local Government Council, Technology Council, and the Workforce Investment Board. Much emphasis has been placed on the need for economic
development and workforce development to be integrally linked, and a great deal of effort is spent on information sharing and coordination. The Region 2000 Partnership has its own coordinated and shared strategic vision plan that sets the overarching goals, a single “brand,” and a single website with a shared portal with a coordinated appearance that links to each of the partner websites. The four partners have worked on developing and implementing this vision of a coordinated regional planning process for years and meet or talk at least weekly. To further promote communication, coordination and the branding as a single entity, the four partners have agreed to co-locate administrative staff in a new location and share the costs of rent. It is anticipated that this move will occur in early 2007 and that the relationship will become formalized over time.

- Career Center has Established Strong and Successful Reliance on and Use of Partners. The Career Center has been able to increase its service capacity to a significant degree by developing strong relationships with a number of key partner agencies, most of which have at least some on-site presence each week. Because it is a stand-alone Center and the number of Career Center staff is limited, these partnerships play a critical role in filling out the menu of services that the One-Stop Center provides either on-site or through referrals. For example, a DSS staff person is on-site weekly to provide a job search workshop and customers needing additional job readiness services are referred to a nearby community-based partner.
I. Introduction

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) authorizes funds to provide the employment and training services of various programs and organizations through a system of One-Stop Career Centers. These One-Stop Career Centers (referred to as Virginia Workforce Centers in the Commonwealth of Virginia) provide a range of employment, training, education and supportive services funded under WIA, Wagner-Peyser, and a variety of other programs. The programs and services provided through One-Stop Career Centers – and the public and private sector organizations delivering services – vary substantially across Centers and are intended to be tailored to the unique needs, environment, and characteristics of each locality. The Virginia Workforce Centers operate under the guidance of the Virginia Workforce Council and Workforce Investment Boards in sixteen Workforce Investment Areas across the Commonwealth.

This report is intended to highlight and assess local operations of the South Central Workforce Investment Board (WIB), with a particular focus on operations of the full-service, certified One-Stop Career Center in South Boston. Report findings are based on a one-day site visit to interview WIB staff and administrators and staff at the South Boston One-Stop Center, supplemented by readily available documentation and data.

II. Local Workforce Investment Board (WIB) Service Area and Operations

Background. The South Central WIB oversees WIA operations across a vast area of 10 counties south of Richmond down to the North Carolina line. The 10 counties include Amelia, Brunswick, Buckingham, Charlotte, Cumberland, Halifax, Lunenburg, Mecklenburg, Nottoway, and Prince Edward.

SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SOUTH CENTRAL WORKFORCE INVESTMENT AREA (LWIA VIII)

Geographic Area Served: 10 jurisdictions served, including counties of Amelia, Brunswick, Buckingham, Charlotte, Cumberland, Halifax, Lunenburg, Mecklenburg, Nottoway, and Prince Edward.

Virginia Workforce Centers: 4 certified comprehensive One-Stop Centers in South Boston, Farmville, South Hill and Charlotte County; 8 information centers in Charlotte, Wylliesburg, Keysville, Phoenix, Amelia County, Cumberland County, Nottoway County, and Victoria.

Population in Service Area (2000 Census): 200,000

Unemployment rate (September 2006): 4.7 %

Adult and Dislocated Worker WIA Funding (PY 2005): $1,051,244; Adult – $623,009; Dislocated Worker – $ 428,235

Adult and Dislocated Worker WIA Enrollments (PY 2005): 1380: Adults – 519; Dislocated Workers – 861
and Prince Edward. Halifax County, where the South Boston WIB is located, is the largest county geographically and in population. The area is entirely rural. The region as a whole has an unemployment rate of 5 percent, higher than the state average but also considerably lower than it was just three years ago when unemployment peaked at 12 percent.

The South Central area has experienced a pronounced decline in their economy in the last few years. For decades, South Central Virginia had an economy based in furniture and textile industries, agriculture and blue-collar jobs. These industries have experienced marked declines in the last decade. Since 2001, thousands of workers have been dislocated due to plant closings or large lay-offs, and economic development and workforce systems have had little to moderate success in reversing the trend by bringing in new employers and replacing the industrial base. These economic trends are experienced across all 10 counties. Companies such as Burlington Industries, Russell Stover Candies, West Point Stevens, D-Scan furniture, and O’Sullivan Furniture have all shut down. Several more companies are scheduled to phase-out operations within the next year. The job prospects of many long-term older employees of these industries are poor due to little education and few transferable skills. About one-third of the population in South Central is without a high school diploma or GED. The area’s population is growing younger — those under age 25 now make up over half of the population—but even younger workers need a considerable skills upgrade to meet the job qualifications of newly established companies. A key challenge for the workforce system has been helping incumbent workers, unemployed individuals, and dislocated workers move into new jobs and helping job seekers in general stay mobile or acquire new skills to keep up with shifting workforce needs.

**WIB Staffing and Operations.** The South Central WIB is comprised of 22 members. In the past few years the WIB has worked on changing its management structure so that the Board can focus more on policy issues rather than operational details. The WIB office is located in Charlotte County and has five full-time staff. They include: an Executive Director; an Operations Manager; a Youth Coordinator for both the In-School and Out-of-School Youth Programs; a Fiscal Officer; and an Office Administrator. Subsequent to the site visit, WIB staff reported that a Business Services Specialist will be hired beginning January 1, 2007.

There are four certified One-Stop Centers in LWIA VIII. Three of the four are operated by the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) and one is operated by the Department of Social Services (DSS). The WIB uses a competitive bid process to select WIA service providers. The Southside Virginia Community College (SVCC) holds the contract for Youth services for the entire region. Because the region covers a large rural area where many low-income residents cannot drive long distances to the main service centers, the WIB has established eight information centers where clients can learn about how WIA programs can assist them. The eight information offices are located at Charlotte Court House Library, Wylliesburg Library, Keysville Library, Phoenix Library, Amelia County Library, Cumberland County Public Library, Nottoway County DSS and Steps, Inc. in Victoria. The One-Stop Centers and information centers in LWIA VIII are strategically located to try to minimize the distance potential clients need to access services.
In Program Year (PY) 2004, nearly 54,000 visitors (duplicated) received core-level services at all of the service locations together; 662 individuals were enrolled in intensive-level services, and 370 were in enrolled in WIA training.

**WIB Funding.** The South Central WIB has a budget of $1.4 million for PY 2006. The budget is based solely on WIA formula funds. The PY 2006 budget includes approximately $500,000 of money carried over from the previous year. WIB staff report being most challenged by reductions in WIA formula funds, including an approximate $100,000 reduction from PY 2005 to 2006. The declines have been across the board, but felt most acutely in the Adult and Youth Programs. The impact on dislocated workers has been less pronounced thanks to significant infusions of Rapid Response funds since 2001 due to the high number of plant closings and large lay-offs in the area. WIB staff stressed the difficulty of meeting the larger workforce system objectives given its large geographic area, significant economic challenges and dwindling budget resources. WIB efforts to obtain additional grants to supplement WIA funding have not met with any success.

**WIB Partnering.** The WIB has many partners but its strongest linkages are with the VEC, DSS, and SVCC. These partnerships allow each entity to leverage each other’s resource to expand and enhance their respective services. VEC staff operate the One-Stop Centers’ Resource Areas and provide a wide range of core services for One-Stop customers. The WIB is pursuing a stronger relationship with regional Economic Development agency so that they can help develop the skill level of area residents to meet the occupations and industries being recruited, but this relationship is still relatively new and in the early stages of development.

Aside from key partners contracted to operate the One-Stop Centers and provide WIA services, agreements for in-kind resource sharing are brokered at the local level. The WIB prefers a sub-regional approach to developing partnerships, as staff at the local level are more likely to be able to build on long-established connections and cooperative relationships with agencies and organizations. It was noted that the region’s economic challenges and program budgetary constraints has fostered a willingness among service providers to coordinate for the mutual benefit of their respective clients. However, given their own fiscal constraints, this spirit of collaboration did not extend to partners making fiscal contributions to One-Stop Center operations; virtually all partner contributions are in-kind.

### III. South Boston One-Stop Center Operations

**Background.** The VEC operated One-Stop Center in South Boston offers WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker services for the county of Halifax and the surrounding area. The South Boston One-Stop Center serves upwards of 18,500 visitors (duplicated count) per year. WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker services have been offered here since 2000. The South Boston One-Stop Center is centrally located for the area it serves, with a prominent “Virginia Workforce Network” sign displayed outside. The VEC rents office space to the WIA staff and charges for use of some administrative resources. A major challenge to accessing workforce services in the region is the lack of public transportation. There is no bus system in the entire region.
One-Stop Center Funding. The VEC has an annual operating budget of approximately $228,190 to support the South Boston One-Stop Center. WIA formula funds comprise about one-third of the total One-Stop Center budget. The VEC offices each contribute a portion of the salary for a WIA Coordinator that supervises WIA staff at each of the three VEC One-Stop Centers in the area. Funding for programs administered by the VEC other than WIA provide most of the financial resources used to support services available through the Boston One-Stop Center operations. The WIA system leverages core-level customer services contributed by the VEC, including equipment and staff to guide customers through self-directed services. WIA funds pay for the salaries of two Case Managers that assist WIA-eligible adults and dislocated workers, rent, the use of equipment and materials, supportive services to registered customers, and other minor costs.

One-Stop Center Staffing. The South Boston One-Stop Center houses about 13 staff in total. WIA funds are used to support four staff positions. Several VEC Workforce Service Representatives offer assistance to customers seeking core services including helping with their job search, preparing resumes and other work-related documents, and helping clients access VEC services such as online claims filing for Unemployment Insurance. The Workforce Service Representatives also conduct one-on-one individual screening for client eligibility for several programs, including WIA. They are also among the staff at the One-Stop Center that receive job orders from employers and match clients with available jobs. Two WIA Case Managers provide intensive and training services for adults and dislocated workers. These Case Managers conduct assessments of client needs and skill levels, WIA enrollment, and job matching. The Coordinator for WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs oversees 10 WIA Case Managers across the region and works out of the South Boston office for two- to three days per week. The front desk is staffed by a clerk.

The direct service staff at the South Boston One-Stop Center are burdened by very heavy caseloads that at times make it difficult to offer what they consider an appropriate level of personalized services to clients. Staff described caseloads of upwards of 100 enrolled clients. The most difficult times are during plant closings or lay-offs when staff are called upon to perform outreach, screening and enrollment for sometimes hundreds of affected individuals. It was reported that it is not unusual for Case Managers to share responsibilities for assisting between 300 and 500 newly dislocated individuals.

Engaging and Serving Job Seekers at the One-Stop Center. Customers that visit the South Boston One-Stop Center are offered a combination of services that encompass all of the VEC services in addition to WIA Dislocated Worker and Adult services. The One-Stop Center provided core services for over 18,500 visitors (duplicated) during the past program year. Between January and September 2006, they had enrolled 209 individuals in the Dislocated Worker Program and 159 individuals in the Adult Program. The majority of South Boston clients are walk-ins, although many clients are also touched during Rapid Response activities at other service locations or at a job site. WIA staff said they also regularly receive referrals from the various county DSS offices located in LWIA VIII. The main services available on-site at the One-Stop Center are labor exchange services (both self-help and staff-assisted), help with obtaining Unemployment Insurance (UI), and WIA core and intensive and training services.
In the midst of difficult and challenging economic circumstances, staff report that they have made a concentrated effort to coordinate and integrate services on behalf of clients. Staff at every level emphasized that their strength, particularly in their approach to dislocated workers, is that they “know how to address their concerns,” they “take a holistic approach to [serving] each person,” and they “know how to bring money back to the people.”

Staff reported that they try to bring as many resources as possible to bear (both within the Center and with partner agencies) to increase the likelihood that a client will achieve a successful employment outcome. They described regular coordination between staff and partner agencies on client cases. VEC staff at the One-Stop Center work with WIA Case Managers to help clients access other dislocated worker supports, including Trade Act and Rapid Response assistance, Pell Grants to defray education and training costs, and other help. One-Stop Center staff also regularly discuss client cases with the DSS staff to help clients in the WIA Adult Program access a range of work supports, including child care assistance and food stamps. Workforce Representatives and WIA Case Managers both highlighted lack of transportation and child care as two key barriers many clients need assistance with to facilitate entry or re-entry into work.

Some staff were critical of the Virginia Workforce Network (VWN) Information System, the state’s performance management system, noting areas of weakness such as poor quality, timeliness, and usefulness. In general, staff indicated that the system was very cumbersome to use. Because the state system reportedly does not provide access to information that can be used internally to track performance and make necessary changes throughout the year, One-Stop staff continue to maintain a great deal of paperwork for internal tracking purposes, and there is substantial duplication of data collected and entered into different systems. To begin to remedy this, some Case Managers developed a new Individual Employment Plan (IEP) form that can be translated more easily into the tracking systems.

Several key services available at the South Boston One-Stop Center are briefly highlighted below:

- **Intake and Core Services.** Customers are greeted by a front desk clerk when they first come into the One-Stop Center. First-time visitors are guided through the multiple services available at the One-Stop Center including the Resource Area and more personalized services from individual program staff. In almost all instances, newcomers are registered with the Employment Service. They are also asked to fill out a client information form. This form is passed on to the Workforce Service Representative, who then conducts the initial assessment to determine whether the customer should be referred to more intensive job search assistance or other supports. Customers can receive individualized assistance with their job search from the Workforce Service Representatives without being enrolled in any VEC or WIA program. Clients that have used core services for at least 30 days but have not been successful with their job search, or customers that have multiple barriers to work, are referred to a WIA Case Manager for intensive services.

The Resource Area is equipped with a variety of information and equipment necessary to conduct a thorough job search. Highlights include several computers with internet
accessibility, access to the ALEX job search site, online Unemployment Insurance claims filing, and word processing capabilities; resource manuals regarding all aspects of job searching, including resume writing and interviewing skills; fax machines and telephones; printers; a TDD machine; copier; resume development software; current literature on career information and partner and community resources; telephone and business directories; and other supplies for use in a job search. Job search assistance is also provided through occasional Re-employment Services Orientations (RSO) sessions offered by the VEC.

**Intensive Services and Training.** Clients enrolled in a WIA program are often given the O*NET and TABE tests to assess their job skills and interests. An ITA limit is set at $8,500 for each WIA participant. Staff reported that there are an adequate numbers of training providers in the area that offer both short-term and longer-term education and training programs. Staff reported that while they do have access to current information on local workforce and business needs and job opportunities, they would like more support on staying up-to-date on labor market conditions, including projections of in-demand jobs so they can better prepare clients. Training enrollees are currently heavily concentrated in training for truck driving, heavy equipment operation, construction, teaching and clerical work.

One of this area’s strongest and most notable accomplishments is their use of on-the-job training placements (OJTs). Direct service and supervisory staff emphasized that they heavily promote OJT programs and have supported hundreds of OJTs through dozens of contracts with employers in the last few years. Given the depressed economy, job placement is challenging and often a protracted process even for clients that get ITAs. Staff explained that they like to use OJTs to ensure that clients will have work after they complete their education or training program. (See next section for additional information).

**Engaging and Serving Employers at the One-Stop Center.** The WIB and South Boston One-Stop make several efforts to conduct outreach and form partnerships with area employers and businesses. The One-Stop Center provides a standard array of customized services for employers interested in listing jobs with the Job Service – for example, taking job orders from employers in-person, via the telephone, or by internet; and matching job seekers to job openings. The WIA Case Managers individually establish and maintain contact with area employers to improve their job placement rate. One of the WIA Case Managers occasionally conducts personal visits with employers. WIA and VEC staff have also worked closely with employers as part of Rapid Response activities. VEC staff attend the VEC Employer Advisory Committee and Chamber of Commerce meetings where they network with area business representatives and learn about workforce needs, trends and job openings. They also advertise job openings in a weekly radio ad to attract interested and qualified job seekers. The air time is paid for by local employers. Although it does not have staff dedicated to business and employer outreach, the WIB produces a quarterly newsletter for the business community that features information on the activities of the workforce system, and has participated in two job fairs in the last year.
As noted above, WIA Supervisory and Case Management staff have made a concerted effort to promote and establish OJT training contracts with area employers. OJTs are viewed positively because they improve success on performance standards (OJT clients are almost guaranteed successful long-term placement after completing the training period) and help establish positive relationships with area employers. Using OJTs as an employer marketing strategy has by all accounts been quite successful; staff have established dozens of OJT agreements with employers and have placed 154 individuals in OJT between July 2002 and July 2006. For example, OJT contracts were established in the last year with a new company that produces air balloons and with a company that produces electrical transformers and generators. However, funding constraints over the past few months prior to this study’s site visit have prompted staff to reign in the use of OJTs for the year.

**One-Stop Center Partnering.** The South Boston One-Stop Center partnerships involve in-kind resource sharing, mostly in the form of a relatively limited on-site presence. Neither the WIB nor the One-Stop have approached other groups about cash contributions as they are also constrained with tight budgets. DRS has provided several services to the One-Stop Center, including a facility accessibility assessment. Two agencies – DRS and the Lake County Area Agency on Aging – have a scheduled weekly presence to assist One-Stop customers. Two other agencies – the Halifax County DSS and Job Corps – also come to the One-Stop Center on an occasional basis to assist referred clients. The One-Stop Center has also worked with the Southern Virginia Higher Learning Center, a consortium of five local community colleges, to develop skills certificate programs for clients with low education and who do not have their GEDs. WIA Case Managers have visited the local prisons to market the services of the workforce system, and prison officials sometimes refer ex-offenders to the One-Stop Center for job assistance. The Halifax County DSS and the South Boston One-Stop Center have also partnered with United Way to produce a directory of human service organizations in Halifax County that can help residents identify and access available social supports or financial assistance.

**IV. Challenges and Interesting/Promising Practices**

The South Central WIB and South Boston One-Stop Career Center face several challenges to providing services and meeting the needs of job seekers and employers, including the following:

- **Difficulties Establishing Co-Location with Partners and On-Site Partner Services.** Although the South Boston Center maintains strong partnerships with a few local agencies and organizations, it has experienced difficulties in getting other partnering organizations to commit to co-location or service provision on-site. Very few agencies have a regular or scheduled presence at the One-Stop Center.

- **Difficulties Getting Other Partners to Contribute Funding to Support One-Stop Operations.** The South Central One-Stop has not had success in obtaining funding from other organizations to offset costs of operating the One-Stop Center. All costs of operating the One-Stop Center are borne by VEC and WIA. WIB and One-Stop administrators described positive and collaborative relationships with various partners, but indicated that leadership is needed at the state level to encourage or enforce local
resource-sharing because local agencies are already making efforts but are also strapped for funding.

- **WIA Staff Burdened with Heavy Caseloads.** Funding constraints have resulted in a lean staffing in the South Boston One-Stop Center. Two WIA Case Managers are responsible for administering WIA program service. Caseloads and associated workload was reported as difficult to manage – especially during plant closings and large lay-offs. Case Managers found their ability to provide individualized Intensive Services to WIA clients was constrained by the need to carry out enrollment and other responsibilities.

The South Central WIB and South Boston One-Stop Center feature some interesting and promising practices:

- **Progress toward Achieving Service Integration and Service Coordination.** Although there is not a high level of partner presence, the South Boston One-Stop Center has still worked hard to coordinate and integrate services for clients. Staff at all levels emphasized taking a “holistic approach” to serving each client. They described a variety of ways they draw together as many resources as possible to help clients by sharing resources and forms, developing community resource books, and communicating at meetings and joint group events. Staff reported that they regularly coordinate services with other area agencies and organizations to package financial and social supports that will steer clients through economically vulnerable transition periods and help them pay for education or training when necessary.

- **Successful Strategy for Promoting and Establishing On-the-Job Training Opportunities.** The area has made a concerted and successful effort to promote and establish on-the-job training contracts with area employers and to create long-term job opportunities for job seekers. Staff have established dozens of contracts with employers for OJT services and, between July 2002 – July 2006 have placed 154 clients with employers under such arrangements. These relationships raise the profile of the workforce system and help create in-roads for targeted recruitment and job placement arrangements.
I. Introduction

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) authorizes funds to provide the employment and training services of various programs and organizations through a system of One-Stop Career Centers. These One-Stop Career Centers (referred to as Virginia Workforce Centers in the Commonwealth of Virginia) provide a range of employment, training, education and supportive services funded under WIA, Wagner-Peyser, and a variety of other programs. The programs and services provided through One-Stop Career Centers – and the public and private sector organizations delivering services – vary substantially across Centers and are intended to be tailored to the unique needs, environment, and characteristics of each locality. The Virginia Workforce Centers operate under the guidance of the Virginia Workforce Council and Workforce Investment Boards in sixteen Workforce Investment Areas across the Commonwealth.

This report is intended to highlight and assess local operations of the Capital Area Workforce Investment Board (WIB), with a particular focus on operations of the full-service, certified One-Stop Career Center in Sandston. Report findings are based on a one-day site visit to interview WIB staff and administrators and staff at the Capital Area Training Consortium One-Stop Center, supplemented by readily available documentation and data.

II. Local Workforce Investment Board (WIB) Service Area and Operations

Background. The Capital Area WIB oversees WIA operations across seven counties surrounding the city of Richmond: Henrico, Chesterfield, Hanover, Charles City, New Kent, Powhatan, and Goochland. In an area with about 668,000 residents, the two comprehensive certified One-Stop Centers are located in the two largest counties – Chesterfield (population of 260,000) and Henrico (population of 262,000).
The Capital Area boasts a strong economy over the last few years. It has a low unemployment rate of 2.9 percent — considerably lower than the national and state average, coupled with low poverty rates. It depends on a diverse economic base, with the largest employment concentrations in retail trade, government, finance/insurance, and health care. This diversity has largely sheltered the area from downturns during shifts in industry trends. The retail and service industries now account for the highest demand for trained workers — specifically in health care and education.

**WIB Staffing and Operations.** The WIB operates the WIA program in combination with the Capital Area Training Consortium (CATC), a public workforce services system formed by the Chief Elected Local Officials to cover the seven county area. In 2000, the Consortium appointed the Workforce Investment Board, and Henrico County, a member of the Consortium, became the WIA fiscal agent. The WIB’s One-Stop Operator Team is made up of four agencies: the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC), the CATC, the Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS), and Senior Connections. The WIB is comprised of 31 members. The Board has a staff of four full-time staff and one shared staff position: an Executive Director, a Fiscal Officer, an Employment and Training Specialist, an Administrative Assistant and a shared IT Specialist. All staff to the WIB are Henrico County employees.

The CATC operates the two comprehensive certified One-Stop Centers in LWIA IX; a VEC office in Henrico county operates the other. Altogether, the two CATC operated One-Stop Centers received 9,100 visits during Program Year 2005, an average of 760 per month. The vast majority of visits were made by returning customers – only 15 percent were first time visitors. Subsequent to the site visit, it was reported that plans are underway to develop and implement a recommendation of the *State of the Emerging Workforce Report* to establish a mobile One-Stop to address the broad service area and need for services to be distributed to the localities with some level of equity in Program Year (PY) 2006-07.

The WIB and its staff play several important roles in promoting and enhancing the provision of employment and training services through its One-Stop Career Centers. WIB staff offer ongoing technical assistance to support and enhance operations at the three One-Stop Centers (e.g., issues related to program design and entering data into the statewide MIS system). It also provides oversight of quality of services offered at the One-Stop Centers; the WIB designed a customer feedback form that is distributed to customers and monitors customer responses and provides the feedback to the One Stop Operator. To promote the services at the service delivery centers, the WIB undertook several marketing efforts, including Public Service Announcements (PSAs) that run regularly on TV stations and a *State of the Emerging Workforce Report*, produced through the Board’s Youth Council, featuring the data and recommendations for improving the readiness of youth. The report targets a broad audience of potential youth program participants, regional and sub-regional youth advocates and service providers, and the employer community. WIB staff and One-Stop Center staff both emphasized the need for increased marketing to raise awareness of WIA services and enhance local operations through more and better partnerships.

A critical challenge for the WIB over the years has been securing Youth Program service providers, with lack of consistent funding cited as a major impediment. The area lost two key
WIA Youth Program contractors midway through Program Year (PY) 2005. WIB staff reported finding that most youth serving organizations in the area either are reluctant to undertake or lack the capacity to fulfill the full set of WIA Youth Program requirements. Eligible organizations must be skilled in conducting outreach, tracking program services and outcomes, building partnerships to create opportunities for young participants, and providing training or placing participants in internships or employment, while providing access to the 10 required youth components. Many interested groups are only interested or experienced in providing specific services that may address some, but not all, of the required program elements. A principal hindrance to obtaining providers has also been the system’s need for providers to serve multiple communities, coupled with the distance between the communities and the lack of transportation resources or alternatives to bring youth to service locations. Most provider networks do not extend across communities. In response to the service capacity constraint, the WIB did consider contracting the Youth Program to several providers, by county or sub-region, but concluded there were insufficient budgetary resources to cover the costs of this alternative.

**WIB Funding.** The Capital Area WIB is supported by WIA formula funds and has a WIA budget of $1.2 million for PY 2005. The WIB allocations for PY 2005 were $556,566 for Dislocated Workers, followed by $338,652 for Youth and $293,693 for Adult Programs. This base amount is supplemented through a variety of federal grants and local county government revenue. The WIB has received Work Incentive Grants from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) planning funds, and also special funds from the State for the Career Readiness initiative and an incentive award for regional initiatives. In addition to the WIA and other federal grant sources, the Capital Area receives approximately $270,000 annually from the general fund revenues of the counties that comprise the CATC. Spending on service delivery at the two One-Stop Centers comprises 70 percent of expenditures; WIB operations take up the remaining amount. Attempts to obtain additional grants to supplement the workforce system budget over the past year have been stymied because the fiscal agent in this workforce area is a government entity (rather than a 501(c)(3) nonprofit), which means that they are not eligible for many grants. WIB staff stressed the difficulty of operating the Adult and Youth Programs with the substantially decreased allocations; dislocated worker funds were transferred to the Adult Program to provide more services to adults.

The WIB is able to leverage significant county resources and funds that increases capacity to serve the workforce needs of the community through the partnership with the Consortium. In addition to the support received through counties’ general revenue funds noted above, the Henrico County government owns the building in which the Henrico One-Stop Center is located and the WIB forgoes rent and some maintenance costs associated with operating the facility. (This is not the case for the Chesterfield One-Stop Center where the WIB pays for the full rent and maintenance of that facility.)

**WIB Partnering.** The WIB has fostered strong partnerships with the four core agencies that serve on the One-Stop operator team – the VEC, CATC, DRS, and Senior Connections. The Consortium arrangement adopted by the WIB has enabled this LWIA to benefit from substantial in-kind resources, including staff time, building space, facility maintenance and infrastructure. The VEC uses Wagner-Peyser funding to operate a VEC field office in Henrico County that includes a Resource Area and provides a wide range of core services for visitors. The DRS
provides accessibility assessments of One-Stop Center facilities and staff reported frequent referrals to the agency for customers with a disability. The Senior Connections program provides part-time staff at the three One-Stop Centers in the area. Virtually all of partner contributions are in-kind.

The WIB has pursued a stronger relationship with the regional Economic Development agency over the last few years in order to develop the skill level of area residents in occupations and industries that the economic agency is trying to strengthen locally. The Board has established relationships with four of the seven county economic development representatives. In the last program year, it gave priority to eight industry clusters identified by the economic development agencies for WIA funds, and identified and approved education and training providers for each cluster.

The WIB also has a strong partnership with the Richmond WIB and the Crater WIB which are involved with the Capital Area in developing a regional approach to BRAC, joint planning for youth and sharing youth training providers. Significant partnerships have also been developed with the Medical College of Virginia/Virginia Commonwealth University in the provision of services for youth that are supported by the three WIBs. The social services agencies in the region are also working across WIB areas in the delivery of services to TANF participants.

III. Capital Area One-Stop Center Operations

**Background.** The Capital Area Workforce Center office in Henrico County offers comprehensive WIA Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth services for the seven county area. The majority of the approximately 9,100 visits per year to the CATC workforce centers and satellites are made to the Capitol Area One-Stop Center and virtually all (90 percent) of WIA services are provided through the Capital Area One-Stop Center. The facility is known for offering workforce services in the area since before WIA’s implementation. Many Capital Area Workforce Center staff are long-standing Consortium employees who are experienced in serving the workforce needs of the community. The Henrico Capital Area Workforce Center is centrally located and is accessible on the bus line. In general, staff perceived that the Capital Area Workforce Center in Henrico was operating at full capacity in terms of customer visits and services offered. Subsequent to the site visit, it was reported that the County of Henrico had approved a Capital Improvement Budget from the General fund of approximately $2.3 million to construct a new facility to increase the capacity and capability of the center to meet the growing demand for assistance.

**One-Stop Center Funding.** The One-Stop Center in Henrico has an annual budget of approximately $287,745. The WIA program provides most of the funding for programs administered by the One-Stop Center as well as the costs of operating the facility. The WIA system leverages substantial in-kind resources from the Consortium. Consortium contributions support the manager position of the Capital Area One Stop Centers for the Consortium, building costs, facility maintenance and infrastructure. In addition, the Consortium offers additional space at other county facilities for staff to conduct partner meetings, workshops, presentations, or job fairs. Additional grants have supported the addition of video conferencing capabilities to the
One-Stop Center as well as several other agencies in the surrounding area. The Henrico One-Stop Center does not offer any standardized fee-for-services. It was reported that fees have occasionally been established to support special requests from vendors and other agencies.

**One-Stop Center Staffing.** The Henrico One-Stop Center houses about 6.75 full time staff in total, all of whom are employees of Henrico County. This staffing total does not include the 4.25 WIB staff located at the facility. The staff is augmented with two part-time Title V Senior Community Service Employment Program participants from Senior Connections who work in the Resource Area. WIA funds support almost all of the staff positions responsible for the provision of WIA services. One-Stop Center staff include a Center Director (Deputy Director of the Consortium), an Administrative Assistant, an Employment and Training Specialist who oversees all of the data entry and reporting and monitoring of the information that goes into the data system related to WIA, and an Employment and Training (ET) Specialist who serves adult and dislocated workers by conducting WIA enrollment and case management, developing employment plans, matching clients to jobs and conducting follow-up, and leading several of the information and skills-building workshops offered at the facility. A second ET Specialist is exclusively responsible for Youth Program services and provides case management, develops individual service plans, and conducts outreach, recruitment, and follow-up. A Vocational Specialist conducts customer interest and skills tests using TABE, CareerScope and other tests as appropriate. An Office Assistant provides assistance to core services customers including introducing them to the resources and programs available at the facility (including all partner programs), assisting with instruction on how to use the equipment in the facility, and assisting in customers’ job search processes by helping them find needed information and helping with resume preparation. This staff is also capable of providing information on where work-related documents may be found and what resources exist in the community to provide support as needed.

Staff responsible for providing WIA intensive services are challenged by the need to fulfill the multiple roles and responsibilities. The staff felt supported by management and characterized the One-Stop Center as a mostly resourceful, dedicated and collaborative work environment, but also described long work hours just to be able to keep up with their workload. The ET Specialists generally share responsibility for a large caseload in addition to facilitating workshops and information sessions, assisting clients in the Resource Area, following up with clients who have already entered employment or an education or training program, and entering client data into the state database. Because a Job Developer position has gone unfilled for several months, ET Specialists are also responsible for performing client job matching services. ET Specialists carry caseloads of 40-50 cases and noted that heavy workloads reduce the amount of one-on-one time that staff can dedicate to clients. Staff also highlighted the need for additional training or referral sources for assisting senior customers, which make up a significant customer base.

A substantial portion of the workload of direct service staff involves collecting and entering information into internal and external forms and databases. One area of consensus among staff is the poor quality, timeliness, and usefulness of the state’s performance management system, the Virginia Workforce Network (VWN) Information System. In general, staff indicated that the system was very cumbersome to use. The WIB has tried to address this deficiency by dedicating a staff member to provide technical assistance to One-Stop staff on VWN-related
issues, in addition to collecting and producing performance reports. In the last year, One-Stop staff have received a few trainings on VWN information requirements and assistance on how to enter such into the database. Because the state system reportedly does not provide access to information that can be used internally to track performance and make necessary changes throughout the year, One-Stop staff continue to maintain a great deal of paperwork for internal tracking purposes.

**Engaging and Serving Job Seekers at the One-Stop Center.** The One-Stop Center in Henrico has reportedly gained recognition over the years as the focal point for workforce assistance in the community. The majority of visitors are walk-ins, although other public assistance programs such as the Department of Social Service (DSS) and VEC offices also refer many clients. The majority of Youth program participants are reached via outreach initiatives in area schools and community centers. In addition to WIB-funded television PSAs, the services of the Henrico One-Stop Center are also advertised in the area’s largest newspaper. The Employment and Training Specialists also conduct occasional information sessions on One-Stop Center services at public libraries. The region has a bus service only in the central part of the Capital Area, including about half of Henrico County (and the city of Richmond). Despite its transportation access limitations, the Henrico One-Stop Center is still more accessible than the Chesterfield One-Stop Center, which is not located on any bus line. Overall, however, lack of transportation is a major barrier to access for potential customers who live beyond the central area’s transportation lines.

Several key services available at the Henrico County One-Stop Center are briefly highlighted below:

- **Intake and Core Services.** Customers are first greeted by a front desk clerk. First-time visitors are guided through the multiple services available at the One-Stop Center including the Resource area and more personalized services from individual program staff. This information is provided either through an on-line Power Point presentation, or by the Office Assistant or an ET Specialist. The Office Assistant asks clients to fill out a client information form that is then passed onto an ET Specialist. ET Specialists also regularly serve clients in the Resource Area with job search and job preparation activities, particularly when the area becomes very busy. The customer information form is passed on to a Specialist, who then conducts the initial assessment to determine whether the customer needs personalized assistance for referrals to more intensive job search assistance or other supports. WIA intensive services and training clients typically first use core services for at least 30 days. However if they have not been successful with their job search, or are determined to have multiple barriers to work, they are referred to a ET Specialist.

The One-Stop Center’s Resource Area is equipped with a variety of information and equipment necessary to conduct a thorough job search. Highlights include six computers with internet accessibility and word processing capabilities; resource manuals regarding all aspects of job searching, including resume writing and interviewing skills; fax machines and telephones; printers; a TDD machine; a copier; resume development
software; current literature on career information and partner and community resources; telephone and business directories; and other supplies for use in a job search.

Customers may request individualized assistance with their job search from an ET Specialist without being enrolled in a WIA program. Visitors determined to need more intensive services are referred to a ET Specialist for further screening or intake. The One-Stop Center also offers a 2-hour center information session, guest speaker sessions, and a Basic Computer Skills class facilitated by an ET Specialist; all of these features are available to both core- and intensive-level clients.

- **Intensive Services and Training.** One-Stop customers interested in pursuing education or training meet with an Employment and Training Specialist to assess eligibility and the need for intensive and/or training services. Clients enrolled in a WIA program are often given the TABE or CareerScope to assess their basic skills levels, job skills and interests. There is no established ITA limit. All customers are required to apply for financial aid to support lowered training costs and support service costs. Of the ITAs awarded in PY 2005-06, the average WIA costs per year was less than $500. Staff reported that there are an adequate numbers of training providers in the area and that they also try to use other agency programs to leverage tuition or program support for clients.

One of this LWIAs most innovative programs is the Youth Institutes implemented for eligible participants for the WIA Youth Program. The WIB’s Youth Council developed several short-term courses to expand access and opportunity for area youth to learn about and begin to get experience in high-growth career tracks. The Youth Institutes are used to introduce youth to the demand occupations and to provide them with an opportunity to learn first hand about the industry and its career opportunities. The Institutes are partnerships with three educational entities – the Healthcare Institute which functions in concert with MCV/VCU, the Retail Institute which functions in partnership with the Retail University of Virginia (Longwood University), and the Technology Institute which functions in partnership with ECPI Technical College. In its first year, the Retail Institute trained 35 youth and the Technology program served 20 youth. The Capital Area developed the partnerships and made the programs available to youth from the Crater and City of Richmond WIBs as well. The jointly supported programs were piloted last year with an average of 15-20 students enrolled in each. Each institute includes basic skills development, work readiness preparation, and occupational skills development.

As part of intensive services, youth adults and dislocated workers are encouraged to obtain a Career Readiness Certificate (CRC). Customers who are interested and qualify are eligible to receive funds to pay for the test and any course work required to pass the test. ET Specialists have promoted the CRC to area businesses over the last year and while they have made inroads into increasing employer awareness of the CRC, staff indicated that greater outreach and education efforts on the value of the CRC are needed at the state-level.

**Engaging and Serving Employers at the One-Stop Center.** The WIB and Henrico One-Stop Center are currently pursuing greater efforts to conduct outreach to and form partnerships with
area employers and businesses. At the time of the study site visit, most employer-oriented initiatives or activities were still in the early stages of development. For planning purposes, the Board is increasingly focused on outreach to small businesses. WIB staff have begun conversations with small business leaders (some of whom are WIB members) on how to best enlist their cooperation. It was reported that employers were most interested in establishing recruitment arrangements that ensured referred clients would meet basic skills and work standards, which aligns with ET Specialists’ attempts to build support for the CRC among area employers.

One-Stop Center Partnering. The Henrico One-Stop Center has established partnerships with a few required mandated partners and some non-mandatory partners. Most of the partnerships at the local level involve in-kind resource-sharing, mostly in the form of a very limited on-site presence. Neither the WIB nor the One-Stop Center have approached other groups about financial contributions to help support One-Stop operations as the partners face tight budget constraints.

Overall, developing One-Stop Center partnerships has been very difficult for the area. On-site partner presence is limited to GED classes, weekly testing at the One-Stop Center by Adult Education staff, and a scheduled weekly DSS and VEC presence. Senior Connections staff persons contribute staff time one day per week. In addition, DSS has a contract with the Henrico One-Stop Center to provide a pre-employment assessment module for public assistance participants. The contract is part of a coordinated MOU that also includes Richmond Department of Social Services and the Richmond Career Advancement Center. As part of an intensive four-week job seeking skills program (known as Striving To Achieve and Retain Self-sufficiency, or STARS), the One-Stop Center performs a four-day assessment series that includes assessment testing using the comprehensive CareerScope assessment package and providing the client and the DSS caseworker with written reports on assessment results.

Staff at both the One-Stop and WIB-level noted that agencies are reluctant to establish tangible resource-sharing agreements as they are also constrained with tight budgets. Without higher-level mandates at the state level, staff suggested that local WIA providers have no way to hold agencies accountable for collaboration or building cross-functional teams. There also appeared to be little resource sharing or coordination between the workforce center and other area agencies.

IV. Challenges and Interesting/Promising Practices

The Capitol Area WIB and One-Stop Center in Henrico County face several challenges to providing services and meeting the needs of job seekers and employers, including the following:

- **Difficulties Establishing Co-Location and Other Forms of Resource Sharing with Partners.** Although the Henrico One-Stop Center maintains strong partnerships with a small core set of local agencies and organizations, it has experienced difficulties in getting other partnering organizations to commit to co-location or service provision on-
site. Very few agencies have a regular or scheduled presence at the center. Few classes or workshops are offered on-site.

- **Direct Service Staff Burdened with Heavy Caseloads.** The intensive service staff are challenged by the need to fulfill the multiple roles and responsibilities. Personalized services offered at the intensive level are sometimes limited in order to meet WIA eligibility determination processes and other responsibilities. The ET Specialists carry a large caseload in addition to performing other One-Stop activities, including facilitating workshops and information sessions, assisting clients in the Resource Area, following up with clients who have already entered employment or an education or training program, and entering client data into the VWN database.

- **Securing Youth Program Providers.** The region faces a critical challenge in securing Youth Program service providers. The area lost two of its key WIA Youth Program contractors midway through PY 2005. WIB staff has found that most eligible organizations in the area either are reluctant to undertake or lack the capacity to fulfill the full set of federally defined WIA Youth program requirement.

The Capitol Area WIB and Henrico One-Stop Center feature some interesting practices:

- **Strong Partnership with the County Consortium Facilitates Substantial Leveraging of Resources.** Through the partnership with the Consortium, the WIB is able to leverage significant resources and funds of the counties towards serving the workforce needs of the community. Henrico County owns the facility out of which the One-Stop Center operates and the WIB forgoes rent and some maintenance costs associated with operating the facility. The WIB also benefits from staff resources and infrastructure, staff training, equipment maintenance and other infrastructure costs.

- **Innovative Partnership with Colleges and Universities to Create Youth Institutes.** Although the WIB has had difficulty securing a consistent Youth services provider, the Youth Council has shown innovation in developing career-focused courses together with Virginia Commonwealth University, Longwood University, and ECPI Technical College. 99 youth were enrolled/graduated from the programs in high-demand fields with career potential between July 1, 2004 – August 30, 2006.
MINI-ASSESSMENT OF ONE-STOP CAREER CENTER AND WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD (WIB) OPERATIONS – RICHMOND WORKFORCE INVESTMENT AREA (LWIA X)

I. Introduction

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) authorizes funds to provide the employment and training services of various programs and organizations through a system of One-Stop Career Centers. These One-Stop Career Centers (referred to as Virginia Workforce Centers in the Commonwealth of Virginia) provide a range of employment, training, education and supportive services funded under WIA, Wagner-Peyser, and a variety of other programs. The programs and services provided through One-Stop Career Centers – and the public and private sector organizations delivering services – vary substantially across Centers and are intended to be tailored to the unique needs, environment, and characteristics of each locality. The Virginia Workforce Centers operate under the guidance of the Virginia Workforce Council and Workforce Investment Boards in sixteen Workforce Investment Areas across the Commonwealth.

This report is intended to highlight and assess local operations of the Richmond Workforce Investment Board (WIB), with a particular focus on operations of the full-service, certified One-Stop Career Center in Richmond. Report findings are based on a one-day site visit to interview administrators and staff at the WIB and the Richmond Career Advancement Center, supplemented by readily available documentation and data.

II. Local Workforce Investment Board (WIB) Service Area and Operations

**Background.** The Richmond Workforce Investment Board (WIB) has only one jurisdiction – the City of Richmond – and is the only single WIB-single jurisdiction in the Commonwealth. There is one certified comprehensive One-Stop Center located in downtown Richmond and one satellite center located within the East District Family Resource Center.

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**SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RICHMOND WORKFORCE INVESTMENT AREA (LWIA X)**

- **Geographic Area Served:** City of Richmond
- **Virginia Workforce Centers:** 1 certified comprehensive Career Advancement Center; 1 satellite center (both in Richmond).
- **Population in Service Area (2000 Census):** 197,790
- **Unemployment rate (September 2006):** 5.0%
- **Adult and Dislocated Worker WIA Funding (PY 2005):** $1,069,000; Adult – $627,000; Dislocated Worker – $442,000
- **Adult and Dislocated Worker WIA Enrollments (PY 2005):** 454; Adult – 273; Dislocated Workers - 181
LWIA X covers a relatively small but densely populated area. The City of Richmond has a population of about 200,000. The overall population is declining (a projected decline of 3 percent between 2000-2010) and the age of the residual population is increasing. Minorities comprise 62 percent of the population, compared to 28 percent statewide. Unemployment rates run consistently higher than the state average – five percent in September 2006. An underlying trend, and one that is expected to continue, is a loss of higher paying manufacturing jobs. These jobs are increasingly being replaced by lower paying jobs (requiring different skill sets) in the service sector – particularly in retail and health care. Another key challenge for the workforce system in this area is a significant lack of public transportation. The growth in jobs is largely concentrated in Richmond’s suburban areas but local transit and paratransit bus service serves only small parts of the suburban counties.

**WIB Staffing and Operations.** The Training & Development Corporation (TDC), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit company located in Maine, serves as the City of Richmond’s fiscal and administrative agent for all WIA program services. TDC operates the Richmond Career Center (and its satellite office) and provides staffing services to the WIB. TDC does not contract out any WIA program services. The WIB is staffed by an Executive Director and a Business Services Administrator. The WIB’s administrative office is located in very close proximity to the Richmond Career Center. TDC headquarters handles human resource and accounting (payroll, etc.) functions for the WIB staff and Career Center.

The Board has experienced a significant amount of restructuring over the past few years, including a series of changes in the administrative lines of oversight authority between the City of Richmond and the WIB, the management staffing structure of the WIB and One-Stop Center, and changes in the composition and leadership of the Board. Currently, the WIB and the Career Center each have their own Executive Director; both report to the Board and maintain a close working relationship. The WIB and Career Center staff interviewed for this study felt that the new administrative structure is sound and that the transition of new Board members under the new leadership is moving forward in a positive and productive manner. The Board has a subcommittee structure, which includes the Youth, Operations, Strategic Planning, Finance, and Membership and Development Committees. Career Center staff are assigned to different committees, a practice which facilitates cross-flow of information between the WIB and the Career Center. Because many of the WIB members are new, interactions between the WIB and the Career Center are currently focused primarily on orienting and educating members about One-Stop operations and programs so that the Board can most effectively serve in their policy oversight and guidance role.

**WIB Funding.** In Program Year (PY) 2005, the budget for LWIB X totaled $2,431,000. WIA formula funding is divided between the Adult ($627,000), Dislocated Worker ($442,000), and Youth ($721,000). WIA funding is supplemented through a variety of sources, including $180,000 from a Department of Labor Customized Employment Program (CEP) grant, $87,500 of a WIA discretionary funding award (totaling $150,
000) from the state to design and serve as a demonstration One-Stop Career Center model, $31,000 in funding generated from two smaller grants – a gang reduction youth grant through the Office of the Attorney General and a small IV-D Child Support Enforcement demonstration for non-custodial fathers – and a contract with the Department of Social Services (DSS). There is little to no carry-over in WIA funding from one year to the next, reflecting both the demand for services and a deliberate strategy to spend all available resources on meeting current service needs.

WIA funding rescissions combined with the phase-out of a large grant funded by the Department of Labor/Office of Disability and Employment (a 3-year CEP grant totaling $3.5 million) represent a major challenge for the WIB and Career Center. While experiencing a great deal of success in receiving in-kind contributions from employers (e.g., computers, office supplies) and from service partners (e.g., on-site staff presence), the WIB has not actively pursued trying to generate cash contributions from other partnering agencies to support One-Stop Career Center operations. Given that partners are also functioning on tight budgets, forcing the cost-sharing issue is not considered a viable option and, moreover, would likely undermine efforts to foster a collaborative partnership with a strong on-site partner presence. It was also noted that having TDC as the parent subsidiary corporation greatly enhanced the LWIB’s ability to generate funding through grants, as it could draw upon TDC’s expertise and resources to successfully apply for grants (e.g., the CEP grant and an earlier $5 million Welfare-to-Work grant).

WIB Partnering. The WIB has cultivated close ties with employers, local economic development representatives, and a wide range of community partners. Because of its unique single WIB/single jurisdiction configuration and the integral relationship between WIB partnering activities and its Career Center operations, the description of these partnerships is included in Section III.

III. Richmond One-Stop Operations

Background. The Career Center is located in downtown Richmond and thus very accessible to city residents, particularly those residing in the inner-city. A high share of the Career Center’s customer base have multiple barriers to employment. In addition to poor basic skills, many are living in shelters or transitional housing located near the Career Center, and there is a high prevalence of customers with criminal histories as well as “hidden” disabilities, particularly substance abuse and mental health problems.

One-Stop Center Funding. As noted above in Section I, the Career Center relies primarily on WIA funding with a small share of funding from grants and contracts to fund operations, including staff salaries. Approximately $315,000 is spent to cover rent and related operating costs.

One-Stop Center Staffing. The Career Center has a staff of 17 individuals, all of whom are TDC employees. In addition, several partner staff are on-site on a full or part-time
basis and their presence greatly increases overall staff capacity. The Executive Director, assisted by the Executive Deputy Director, has overall management responsibility for One-Stop operations. The staff (both core staff and on-site partner staff) are divided into teams: Customer Services, Youth Services, Information/Intake, Plan Management and Resource Center, and the CEP Project Teams (funded by the CEP grant). There is also an Employer Services Team that is staffed at the WIB level by the Business Services Representative. Three WIA-funded Plan Managers are responsible for providing WIA adult intensive and training services, with caseloads of about 80 to 100.

The Resource Room, where customers are assisted with core services, is staffed by a many different partner staff. A VEC staff is on-site full-time to assist customers with Employment Service registration, unemployment claims filing, and provide information and referral to other VEC operated programs. The Richmond-National Student Partnership has several volunteers in the Resource Room who provide resume assistance, lead employment workshops, and provide information and referral services to customers needing additional types of assistance (e.g., public assistance, housing, emergency needs). A Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) staff person is on-site two or three days per week, functioning as a Disability Navigator and a Vocational Rehabilitation counselor. Two Senior Community Service Employment Program participants also staff the customer service desk of the Resource Room and provide some administrative support. (More information on partners is described in greater detail below in the description of One-Stop Partnering.)

**Engaging and Serving Job Seekers at the One-Stop Center.** In PY 2004-2005, 17,231 visits were made to the Center for core services, equal to about 1,400 visits each month. The number of individuals receiving core services is not tracked and therefore no unduplicated count is available; however, it was estimated that the Career Center averages 100-150 new customers per month. The Career Center places a very strong emphasis on maintaining a very business-like and professional environment in the resource room, offering a wide range of services, and proactively providing personalized assistance to job seekers to help them access core services. Also notable is the Career Center’s use of an internal case tracking system to document customer’s use of services, including core services, for case management purposes. The system allows management to generate reports in a variety of ways and this flexibility in turn helps Career Center staff better manage the WIA programs and overall One-Stop operations.

Another interesting feature of the Career Center’s operations is the impact that the CEP grant initiative has had on the Center’s relationship with DRS and the strength and influence of a Customized Employment Program (CEP) grant on service delivery. This grant, one of several CEP awarded by the Department of Labor, was designed to increase capacity in the One-Stop system to support individuals disabilities to prepare for, obtain, and advance in jobs. The grant created a much stronger partnership between the Career Center and DRS (as well as several other disability serving providers involved in the grant). In addition to being able to leverage resources by having both CEP grant-funded staff and a part-time DRS-funded Disability Navigator on-site and available to the entire staff for consultation and referral purposes, the grant enabled One-Stop staff to receive a
significant amount of training (provided by the Virginia Commonwealth University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center) on a range of disability-related issues. This training is reported to have significantly increased the ability of staff to identify disabilities, constructively raise and address these issues with customers, make appropriate referrals, and identify promising job opportunities. Plans were underway for the WIA Plan Managers to receive training on how to conduct the kind of jobs analysis that allows for “job carving,” a technique advanced under the CEP grants for identifying and successfully matching jobs for people with disabilities.

Many staff interviewed for this study noted that the disability-related trainings, combined with a close working relationship with DRS, made staff realize that the proportion of customers with mental health, substance abuse, and learning disabilities is really much larger than originally thought and that these barriers to employment had simply gone unidentified in the past. Staff are now reportedly much more actively engaged in making appropriate referrals and working in a team environment with other partners on behalf of clients they share (e.g., it is much more common for Plan Managers to work with DRS on co-planning and co-managing a case in which a customer can be dual-enrolled in WIA and Vocational Rehabilitation). It was also noted that the techniques for addressing issues related to disability are very applicable and useful for working with other hard-to-serve individuals, especially the shelter and ex-offender populations.

Other examples of ways greater service integration has been achieved include the development of a universal referral form that includes a confidentiality release of information. Originally developed and implemented as part of the CEP grant, the Career Center now uses the form for all customer referrals with its partners. Another practice of note is the use of team case conference meetings, or “round tabling,” where partners meet together to talk about the progress of clients and make modifications in the client’s plan. As with the universal referral form, this practice began under the CEP grant as a scheduled monthly partner meeting and represents a new and more much more integrated approach to service delivery for the Career Center. Staff report that it now happens naturally on an as-needed basis and makes a very positive difference.

Several of the Richmond Career Center’s features and services are briefly highlighted below:

- **Intake and Core Services.** In accordance with WIA guidelines, services are offered in a sequential manner, with customers accessing core services before being referred to intensive and training services (if necessary). Visitors are first met by a Customer Services Representative who greets customers as they enter the Career Center and inquire about needs. All customers are first asked to sign in and fill out a data collection form, which collects basic demographic information that can be used to prescreen for eligibility for WIA intensive and training services and also provides Resource Area staff some indication of the customer’s service needs. A Resource Area staff person will also conduct a brief interview with the customer in conjunction with filling out the form, again to get a better idea of service needs and to look for any “red flags” indicating hidden disabilities.
or other more significant barriers to employment. Those interested in using the computer must sign into an automated database. Customers typically also fill out an interest inventory and establish an email account. The email account enables the Career Center to email jobseekers the monthly calendar of events, a flyer of activities, and notices of employer job fairs that are relevant to the interests of the job seekers based on the results of the interest inventory.

Newcomers must view a power point presentation about the services available through the Career Center. The power point presentation, which has a voice over for those who may have difficulty reading, is a relatively new feature that replaced weekly group orientation sessions. The power point presentation is considered by staff to be far more customer friendly and effective than the weekly group orientations because walk-ins can immediately get a detailed overview of the range of services available that enables them to make more effective use of the Career Center offerings. The VEC staff person is also physically located in the front of the resource room to better ensure that clients who are not registered or otherwise accessing VEC services have the opportunity to do so.

Several structural changes were made to Resource Area in the past year that staff uniformly cited as resulting in better customer service and significant cost savings. A “Kinko’s model” service desk manned by partner staff was created. Prior to the establishment of the service desk, access to copiers, fax and telephone were unlimited and often used for purposes that were not related to employment. Now a customer must interact with a customer services representative to gain access to these services. Copies are limited to 10 per customer per day. Staff will proof resumes and cover letters before they are copied or faxed so that errors can be caught and corrected before they are sent to employers.

The Resource Area features access to 21 computers with internet access. Job search is facilitated by access to the Labor Market Information System (LMIS) and various other online job banks. There is a large meeting room available where employers can meet with job seekers individually. Individual employers frequently host scheduled workshops on their particular company’s needs and hiring practices (see Engaging and Serving Employers section below).

The Career Center is also notable for the range and intensity of services it offers to customers that are not enrolled in WIA. In addition to the core services that can be accessed on a self-directed basis, a staff person is available to provide one-on-one help with creating a resume, completing job applications, mock interviewing, identifying places that are hiring, and providing some one-on-one intensive assistance to connect them with employers. In addition, the Career Center offers a wide range of workshops available to all job seekers. For example, in the month of July, there were workshops on such topics as “Networking Career Connections,” “First Steps to Job Search,” a weekly “Career Forum,” “Dress for Success” and financial literacy and education workshops. Staff stationed in the resource center actively monitor customer activity and will refer those who appear
to be having difficulty finding a job or have indicated other red flags on the application form to determine whether more intensive services are appropriate. In addition to these universal workshops, the Career Center has embarked on a series of highly successful weekly workshops for ex-offenders that are supported through a partnership involving the Career Center, Department of Corrections, Probation Office, Police Department and faith-based organizations.

Infusing the Career Center with a work culture and environment is considered critical to employers’ overall perceptions of the Career Center and key to the ultimate success of job seekers using the Center to transition into or move up in the labor force. The goal is to project a professional, business-like image to the employer community so that “it feels like a business operation.” In their marketing and outreach interactions with local businesses, WIB and Career Center staff said they emphasize the business-like quality of the Center and encourage employers to see for themselves that the Career Center is in fact a rich employment resource. Customers are informed that there are basic dress code rules that must be followed. People must be actively engaged in using services available to them in the Resource Room and are prohibited from using the space as a place to pass time. Access to copier, fax, and phone equipment is restricted and closely monitored. For example, in response to reports that computers with internet access were sometimes being used to visit non-employment and inappropriate web sites, the firewall and tracking capability of the computer system was upgraded so that staff can identify which web sites are being accessed and, if necessary, ask the customer to log off the computer.

- **Intensive Services and Training.** Plan Managers meet with customers who appear eligible for and would benefit from WIA intensive services. The Plan Manager first conducts a short interview (about 30 minutes) to review the customer’s work history, interests, and needs. The customer may be asked to complete some additional self-directed activities or attend one of the workshops at this point. A follow-up meeting is scheduled, at which time eligibility information is collected and the person is registered for intensive services. An Intensive Services Strategy plan is developed. In addition to an ongoing and informal assessment based on discussions with the client and monitoring their progress, staff rely on the CHOICES assessment package to help them develop an appropriate Intensive Services Strategy for each customer.

If a customer is deemed appropriate for training (i.e. the customer is interested and motivated and an educational gap is noted through the assessment as a major barrier to allowing the customer to earn a sustainable wage or a wage that is similar to their previous job), training options and providers are considered. Only a small number of customers are enrolled in WIA-sponsored training. The vast majority of clients are enrolled in training offered through the community college (which offers many certificate programs) or, to a lesser extent, proprietary institutions. On-the-Job-Training (OJT) is used by less than 10 people per year.
Many customers of the Career Center have multiple barriers to employment and are in need of an array of supportive services. In addition to the supportive services available through WIA, the Career Center considers the National Student Partnership (which has several student volunteers on-site) as an invaluable resource. Volunteers are very knowledgeable about community resources and provide hands-on referral services to customers. Career Center staff also noted an active effort to link with community resources and employers for wrap-around services. For example, there are linkages with the Dress for Success organization to ensure that job seekers going on interviews can be fitted with appropriate business attire.

**Engaging and Serving Employers at the One-Stop Center.** A strong business–driven orientation dominates LWIA operations at both the WIB staff and Career Center level. The basic guiding philosophy is that engaging and responding to employer needs is paramount to the ultimate success of the workforce system to effectively serve job seekers. To that end, the focus of the business marketing efforts is not to just match job seekers with existing job opportunities but to establish stronger and long-lasting relationships with employers.

The Business Services Representative is the primary contact for employers that do business with the Center. The Executive Director is also heavily involved in reaching out to employers. The WIB, represented by either the Executive Director or the Business Services Representative, is a member of many employer-related associations (e.g., the Metropolitan Business League, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce, and the Greater Richmond IT Consortium) and views having a presence at these venues as very effective for establishing and building relationships with the larger business community. Another effective marketing practice has been to invite employers to come to the Career Center and “see for themselves” what types of services are offered and establish that the Career Center is in fact a place where employers can find motivated and work-ready job applicants.

One significant change at the One-Stop level associated with the increased emphasis on building specialized relationships with employers as opposed to job matching and placement is a shift away from large job fairs in favor of individualized “boutique” employer workshops. Staff reported a growing disenchantment with large job fairs because of the difficulty in measuring the return on investment. Instead, employer related recruiting efforts have increasingly focused on “boutique” employer events where individual employers come to Career Center and explicitly lay out their particular hiring expectations and preferences for prospective applicants on a regular basis. Staff believe that this approach builds stronger relationships with employers while also producing better job matches between employers and job applicants. Overall, the emphasis of the WIB and Career Center staff has been to ensure that relationships with employers are tangibly integrated into the daily operations of the Career Center.

WIB and Career Center staff are strong advocates of the need to tie workforce development with economic development. Although there has been resistance in the past
among economic development representatives to view the workforce development system as a natural ally, this view has changed over time and WIB and Career Center staff describe their relationship with economic development in positive terms. The City of Richmond’s Economic Development Department now provides the WIB/Career Center with previously unavailable informative data. The WIB’s business services representative is invited to attend the City’s economic development meetings (enabling them to be “in” the room) and the Deputy Director of Economic Development is a member of the Board and sits on the WIB Strategic Planning Committee.

**One-Stop Center Partnering.** The Career Center engages many mandatory partners in the delivery of services to One-Stop customers. The Plan Manager Supervisor holds meetings on at least a quarterly basis with front-line staff (including on-site partner staff) to talk about what is working, where there are problems, and what could be done to make operations run more smoothly and improve services to customers. A universal referral form is used that was developed by key partners as part of the CEP grant but now is integrated into everyday use with all partners.

Although not an exhaustive list, the partners identified in discussions with staff included the following:

- **Virginia Employment Commission:** A VEC staff person is placed on-site full-time to assist customers with Employment Service registration and provide information and access to other VEC operated programs. In addition, VEC staff routinely refer jobseekers to the Career Center and a Career Center staff person is outstationed once a week at the local VEC office to meet with dislocated workers identified by VEC staff as in need of intensive or training services.

- **National Student Partnerships (NSP):** NSP-Richmond, part of a national network of student-led volunteers, moved into the Career Center in 2002, making it the second NSP office in the country to be located in a One-Stop Center as well as a groundbreaking collaboration for both organizations. The office is currently staffed by students who volunteer four to fifteen hours per week. Volunteers are primarily recruited from VCU although students from other area post-secondary institutions also serve as volunteers. The NSP volunteers are considered an integral and vital part of the Career Center’s capacity to provide core services. Volunteers are very informed about a wide range of community resources and provide customers with information and referrals to other agencies and services. The volunteers developed and present a weekly Career Forum workshop to help clients with employment strategies as well as help core service job seekers with resume preparation.

- **AARP and Senior Connections:** Each of these organizations places a half-time Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) participant at the Career Center for a total of 40 hours per week. These individuals staff the Resource Area and provide some office administrative support.
• **Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS):** a DRS Disability Navigator is on-site at the Career Center on an itinerate basis (2-3 days per week) and serves as a Disability Navigator and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. As noted above, the Career Center’s close partnership with DRS has had the greatest impact on the service delivery practices of the One-Stop; the work conducted under the CEP grant initiative is credited for providing the groundwork and subsequent momentum for its development. Staff were confident that the partnership would be sustained even after the CEP phased out in fall of 2006, although there was also disappointment that the loss of grant funding would prevent the Career Center from being able to carry out the same level and breadth of services for people with disabilities.

• **Richmond City DSS.** DSS has a contract with the Career Center to provide a pre-employment assessment module for TANF-VIEW and Food Stamp Employment and Training participants. The contract is part of a coordinated Memorandum of Understanding that also includes Capital Area Workforce Center and Henrico County Department of Social Services. As part of an intensive four-week job seeking skills program (known as Striving To Achieve and Retain Self-sufficiency, or STARS) the Career Center performs a four-day assessment series that includes assessment testing using the comprehensive CHOICES assessment package and providing the client and the DSS caseworker with written reports on assessment results. More generally, the Career Center and DSS both utilize a universal referral form to refer clients back and forth when a need for the other’s services is identified.

• **Richmond Public Schools Department of Adult Basic Education.** A GED instructor comes to the Center to provide on-site GED preparation classes and perform TABE assessments. The instructor is typically on-site two days per week.

• **Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA).** Although funding constraints have prevented RRHA from having an on-site presence at the Career Center, the two agencies have developed a close working relationship, particularly with respect to dual enrollment. About 40 percent of Career Center WIA enrollees are public housing residents, so there is considerable overlap in the two organizations’ client base and significant opportunities for service coordination and leveraging of funding. Over the past several years, RRHA resident advisors (i.e. case managers) routinely identify and refer their residents to the Career Center for both core services and, if appropriate, WIA intensive and training services. Eligible residents are then co-enrolled in WIA and RRHA supported programs. RRHA provides transportation support for dual enrollees. Career Center staff, in turn, routinely refer individuals with housing needs to RRHA. At the time of the study site visit, RRHA was undergoing significant system and programmatic restructuring and One-Stop staff and RRHA staff were working closely to determine how best to continue to leverage funding and strengthen the
co-enrollment service delivery approach (e.g., co-facilitate workshops, provide co-enrollees in housing authority work experience positions).

IV. Challenges and Interesting/Promising Practices

The WIB and Career Center have faced several challenges to providing services and meeting the needs of job seekers and employers, including the following:

• **Governance and Administrative Challenges.** The Richmond LWIB has experienced a significant amount of restructuring over the past few years that has involved a series of changes in the administrative lines of oversight authority between the City of Richmond and the WIB, the management staffing structure of the WIB and One-Stop Center, and changes in the composition and leadership of the Board. Currently, the WIB and the Career Center each have their own Executive Director, both of whom report to the Board and maintain a close working relationship. The WIB and Career Center staff interviewed for this study felt that the new administrative structure is sound and that the transition of new Board members under the new leadership is moving forward in a positive and productive manner.

• **Funding Challenges.** Decreases in WIA funding translate into constraints on service capacity. The area could reportedly benefit from more satellite and full-service One-Stop Centers but has insufficient staff and resources to accomplish this. The service capacity of the Career Center benefited greatly from the large CEP grant which was scheduled to be completely phased out by Fall 2006; there is much regret that the level of services and the degree of service integration that occurred as a result of the grant will not be sustained. While experiencing a great deal of success in receiving in-kind contributions from employers and from service partners, the WIB has not actively pursued trying to generating cash contributions from other partnering agencies to support Career Center operations. Given that partners are also functioning on tight budgets, forcing the cost-sharing issue is not considered a viable option and, moreover, would likely undermine efforts to foster a collaborative partnership with a strong on-site partner presence.

• **Service Delivery Challenges.** The Career Center’s job seeker customer base has a high concentration of individuals with severe and multiple barriers to employment. As a result, customers generally need more individualized assistance than is typically provided in a purely self-directed core service approach and help accessing additional social services. The Career Center has adopted a variety of strategies to respond to these needs within the parameters of WIA.
The Richmond WIB and Career Center feature several interesting and promising practices, including:

- **Restructured Core Service Client Flow and Service Access.** Several structural changes were made to Resource Room in the past year that staff uniformly cited as resulting in better customer service and significant cost savings. A “Kinko’s model” service desk manned by partner staff was created. Prior to the establishment of the service desk, access to copiers, fax and telephone were unlimited and often used for purposes that were not related to employment. Now a customer must interact with a customer services representative to gain access to these services. Staff will proof resumes and cover letters before they are copied or faxed so that errors can be caught and corrected before they are sent to employers. In response to the fact that computers with internet access were sometimes being used to visit non-employment related and inappropriate web sites, the firewall and tracking capability of the computer system was upgraded so that staff can tell what web sites a customer is accessing and, if necessary, be asked to log off the computer.

- **Promoting a One-Stop Culture of Work and Professional Environment.** Infusing the Career Center with a work culture and environment is considered critical to the overall image portrayed to employers and key to the ultimate success of job seekers using the Career Center enter to transition into or move up in the labor force. The goal is to project a professional, business-like image to the employer community so that “it feels like a business operation.” In their marketing and outreach interactions with local businesses, Center staff emphasize the business-like quality of the Center and encourage employers to see for themselves that the Center is in fact a rich employment resource. Customers are informed that there are basic dress code rules that must be followed. People must be actively engaged in using services available to them in the resource room and not using the space as a place to pass time.

- **Building Capacity to Identify and Serve People with Disabilities.** In large part due to the capacity building efforts that occurred through the multi-year CEP grant, there is very strong and collaborative partnership between the Career Center and DRS. The grant also enabled One-Stop staff to receive a significant amount of training on a range of disability-related issues and this is reported to have significantly increased staff ability to identify disabilities, constructively raise and address these issues with customers, make appropriate referrals, and identify promising job opportunities. This heightened awareness made staff realize that the proportion of customers with mental health, substance abuse, and learning disabilities was really much larger than originally thought and that these barriers to employment had simply gone unidentified in the past. Staff are now much more actively engaged in making appropriate referrals and working in a team environment with other partners on behalf of clients with disabilities. It was also noted that the techniques for addressing issues related to disability are very
applicable and useful for working with other hard-to-serve individuals, especially
the shelter and ex-offender populations.

• **Strong Reliance on Student Volunteers to Enhance Service Capacity.** Since WIA funding cannot be used to cover the cost of core services, the Career Center has made creative use of volunteers to enhance and expand its core service capacity. The National Student Partnership (NSP), a student-led volunteer service organization, is housed in the Career Center and provides several students on an ongoing bases who volunteer anywhere from four to fifteen hours per week. The NSP volunteers are considered an integral and vital part of the Career Center’s capacity to provide core services. Volunteers are very informed about a wide range of community resources and provide customers with information and referrals to other agencies and services. The volunteers present a weekly Career Forum workshop to help clients with employment strategies as well as help core service job seekers with resume preparation.

• **Success with Service Integration and Coordination.** In addition to having a considerable on-site partner presence, the Career Center has achieved a notable degree of service coordination with various agencies. For example, the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) resident advisors routinely identify and refer their residents to the Career Center for both core services and, if appropriate, WIA intensive and training services. Eligible residents are then co-enrolled in WIA and RRHA supported programs. RRHA provides transportation support for dual enrollees. Career Center staff also routinely refer individuals with housing needs to RRHA. A strong collaborative partnership has also been established with DRS. WIA staff often work with DRS on co-planning and co-managing a case in which a customer can be dual-enrolled in WIA and Vocational Rehabilitation. The Career Center and its partners use a universal referral form that includes a clause permitting release of information. The practice of team case conference meetings, or “round-tableing”—where partners meet together to talk about the progress of clients and make modifications in the client’s plan as needed—began through the CEP grant as a scheduled monthly partner meeting and represents a new and much more integrated approach to service delivery. In addition, service integration is promoted through meetings on at least a quarterly basis with front-line staff, including on-site partner staff, to talk about what is working, where there are problems, and what could be done to make operations run more smoothly and improve services to customers.

• **New and Effective Employer Engagement/Job Placement Strategies.** In general, the WIB and Career Center have adopted a strong employer focus in their approach to service delivery. The emphasis of employer engagement efforts is on building personal and specialized relationships with employers as opposed to individualized job matching and placement. Another strategy that has been implemented with much success is a shift away from large job fairs in favor of individualized “boutique” employer workshops. Staff reported a growing disenchantment with the large job fairs because of the difficulty in measuring the
return on investment. Instead, employer-related recruiting efforts have increasingly focused on individual employer events. Typically, individual employers come to the Career Center and explicitly lay out their particular hiring expectations and preferences for prospective applicants on a regular basis. Staff believed that this approach builds stronger relationships with employers while also producing better job matches between employers and job applicants. The WIB and Career Center staff emphasize that their approach is to tangibly integrate employer services into the daily operations of the Career Center.
I. Introduction

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) authorizes funds to provide the employment and training services of various programs and organizations through a system of One-Stop Career Centers. These One-Stop Career Centers (referred to as Virginia Workforce Centers in the Commonwealth of Virginia) provide a range of employment, training, education and supportive services funded under WIA, Wagner-Peyser, and a variety of other programs. The programs and services provided through One-Stop Career Centers – and the public and private sector organizations delivering services – vary substantially across Centers and are intended to be tailored to the unique needs, environment, and characteristics of each locality. The Virginia Workforce Centers operate under the guidance of the Virginia Workforce Council and Workforce Investment Boards in sixteen Workforce Investment Areas across the Commonwealth.

This report is intended to highlight and assess local operations of the Northern Virginia Workforce Investment Board (WIB), with a particular focus on operations of the full-service, certified One-Stop Career Center (referred to as a SkillSource Center) in Falls Church. Report findings are based on a site visit to interview administrators and staff at the Northern Virginia WIB and the Falls Church SkillSource Center, supplemented by readily available documentation and data.

II. Local Workforce Investment Board (WIB) Service Area and Operations

Background. The Northern Virginia Workforce Investment Board’s administrative offices are located in a private office building in Vienna, Virginia. As of July 1, 2006, the WIB became a 501(c)3 organization (formerly, WIB staff were employees of the Northern Virginia Community College system). The WIB oversees operations across seven local jurisdictions, which include

SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA WORKFORCE INVESTMENT AREA (LWIA XI)

Geographic Area Served: 7 jurisdictions served, including 3 counties (Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William Counties) and 4 cities (Cities of Fairfax, Falls Church, Manassas, and Manassas Park).

Virginia Workforce Centers: 2 certified comprehensive One-Stop centers in Falls Church and Woodbridge; 5 satellite centers in Alexandria, Manassas, Reston, Woodbridge, and Leesburg.

Population in Service Area (2000 Census): 1,497,461

Unemployment rate (September 2006): 2.2 %

Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth WIA Funding (PY 2006 Planning Estimate): $1,501,007

WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker Enrollments (PY 2005): 352; Adult – 190 ; Dislocated Worker – 162
three counties – Fairfax, Loudon, and Prince Williams Counties – and four cities (see table above). The Northern Virginia WIB’s service area accounts for about one-fifth of the state’s population (about 1.5 million people), making it the most populous of the Commonwealth’s 16 LWIAs. The area served includes mostly densely populated urban and suburban areas around the Washington, D.C. area and has in recent years been characterized by rapid population and economic growth.

For example, the local economy has enjoyed rapid job growth (45,000 new jobs during the past year) and very low unemployment rate (less than 3 percent). The three-county area has over 20,000 businesses, including several Fortune 500 companies. There is a strong and growing emphasis on service sector (rather than manufacturing sector) employment. With its increase in high-wage/high-growth jobs, the service area is sometimes compared to urban areas such as Boston, San Diego, Denver, Seattle, and Silicon Valley. Despite featuring mostly buoyant economic conditions, there are some areas of economic weakness and upheaval, including loss of nearly 3,000 airline jobs and anticipated future dislocations (along with job increases) related to military base realignments.

WIB Staffing and Operations. The LWIB has a staff of four full-time staff, which includes two grant writers. Because of its relatively small staff size, the WIB emphasizes contracting out through a competitive bid process to other organizations for delivery of services. The WIB has a 43-member board. The WIB (and staff to the board) plays several roles in promoting and enhancing the provision of employment and training services locally:

- **Licensing and Certification** – The Northern Virginia WIB licenses and certifies One-Stop Centers within the local workforce area. Though the state has a certification process for all sites offering WIA services, the Northern VA WIB established its own separate criteria for certifying One-Stop Centers that offer WIA services to ensure that management processes and services at each One-Stop Center follow the Board’s policies and quality standards. Both the WIB and the One-Stop Center described the standards as more rigorous than those required for state certification. The certification process designates the status of the Centers as either full-service or affiliate centers with a SkillSource license to operate. Centers are assessed every two years, according to standards of service provision, quality assurance and a continuous quality improvement process. The certification process is described as useful for assuring buy-in from the One-Stop Centers to support the goals established by the workforce area, and improving collaboration and information sharing on best practices among the One-Stop Centers.

- **Team Management** – The WIB provides oversight, management, and coordination of One-Stop Centers’ performance through a team structure that consists of a Leadership and Design Team and a Complete Quality Initiative (CQI) Team. Both teams consist of One-Stop Center managers and also representatives from agencies, organizations and businesses that the One-Stop Centers and WIB serve. The Design and Leadership team develop program planning and monitor implementation practices around customer flow and services. The Quality team is responsible for quality of service delivery processes as well as competency of the service staff. Partners typically include representatives from Fairfax City, Virginia Employment Commission, Fairfax City Adult Education, and
Rehabilitative and Blind and Visually Impaired services. The Quality team promotes its goals, for example, through a requirement that all SkillSource staff pass a Worker Competency Certification Process that covers knowledge of program services and professional conduct. Another program reimburses staff who elect for higher certification from the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (NAWDP). Additional monitoring of on-site operations occurs through a regular monitoring process. This involves a semiannual review of performance standards and ratings for each site. The reviewer uses the information management and data collection system for this process to ascertain whether One-Stop Centers have met their goals. Again, WIB staff say this process feeds back into information sharing about best practices among the sites. The WIB leadership and One-Stop Center directors and managers also hold monthly meetings to ensure constant communications and updates on expectations and performance.

- **Marketing Services** – The WIB undertakes marketing of the One-Stop Centers’ services. The marketing efforts aim to increase knowledge of and interest in One-Stop services and ultimately bring more clients into the One-Stop Centers. Marketing activities include producing brochures, pamphlets, a One-Stop Center electronic newsletter brochure sent to businesses, and direct mail postcards.

**WIB Funding.** Because of its generally low unemployment and poverty rates, the Northern Virginia WIB’s total WIA allocation is low relative to its population and compared with other workforce investment areas in the state. The Program Year (PY) 2006 WIA allocation (planning estimate) for the area is $1.5 million (about $1 for each resident across the three-county area served), which is less than seven other LWIBs in the state. In part because of its low per-capita WIA allocation, the LWIB has sought out a variety of grants funds from the federal government and foundations, which has resulted in a near doubling of the LWIB’s budget to about $3 million for the past program year (see box for examples of additional funding sources).

The WIB has two staff dedicated to development and, as needed, works with other grant writers to bring in additional funding. One of the main factors in the

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### SOME ADDITIONAL FUNDING SOURCES AND GRANTS RECEIVED BY NORTHERN VIRGINIA WIB

- **National Emergency Grant (NEG)** – A $250,000 grant received to serve workers displaced by the closing of Independence Airlines.
- **Herb Block Foundation Grant** – A $50,000 grant to support the Workplace Essential Skills program, aimed at expanding workforce training programs for low-income adults in Northern Virginia.
- **Faith and Community Based Workforce Grant** – A $481,500 grant from the U.S. Department of Labor. The Northern Virginia WIB was selected as recipient of U.S. Department of Labor; in January 2006, the SkillSource Group (the non-profit entity of the WIB) awarded grants, ranging from $10,000 to $25,000, to 15 faith-based and community organizations that serve local job seekers facing multiple barriers to employment.
- **Virginia Violent and Serious Offender Reentry Initiative (VASAVOR)** – A $148,000 grant from the Virginia Department of Corrections to provide employment and training assistance to incarcerated serious and violent “offenders serving a state sentence who are released under supervision.” Job training is provided as part of the offender’s transition to the community.
- **Long-Term Care Workforce Initiative** – A $155,000 grant from the Virginia Department of Medical Assistant Services to address the long-term health care workforce shortage in Northern Virginia.
WIB’s decision to become a 501(c)(3) was to be able to focus on bringing in more funding to supplement gradually decreasing WIA funding. Under WIA, most Individual Training Account (ITA) funding goes to support short-term training (over several months) at vocational-technical schools and community colleges. The WIB places considerable reliance on on-the-job training (OJT) – agreements are in place with 10 to 15 employers – which helps to stretch limited WIA training funds (with employers generally paying half of the wage) and contributes to high performance on job placement and retention.

**WIB Partnering.** The Northern Virginia WIB has a active collaborations with many mandatory and non-mandatory partners. Both the WIB and its Falls Church SkillSource Center are located in private building space leased by Fairfax County Government. The relationship between the WIB and the Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC) is also very close. Until its conversion to a non-profit 501(c)(3), the WIB staff were employees of the community college system. The community college is the largest ITA vendor and is a low-cost and flexible source of training for WIA participants. NVCC has several campuses strategically located throughout the three-county area and offers a range of curriculum well-matched to the training needs of individuals served through the One-Stop system. The WIB sponsors a partners' leadership team meeting six times a year to foster collaboration across mandatory and non-mandatory partners. Though all mandatory partners are invited, these meetings are typically attended by representatives from the community college, the One-Stop system, VEC, the adult education system, and vocational rehabilitation.

The WIB has particularly strong linkages with the six economic development agencies that serve the three-county area. The WIB subleases space from the economic development agency that serves Fairfax County and is located on the same floor as this agency. Because of this co-location with the Fairfax County Economic Development Agency (EDA), the WIB Director and staff are in frequent discussions with staff from this agency. The WIB also serves and partners with the other economic development agencies in the area. WIB administrators consider the economic development agencies as “strategic partners” and support the efforts of the EDAs to attract new businesses to the area. The WIB has pursued (and will continue to pursue) new grants in collaboration with the EDAs. The WIB has also carved out $35,000 from its budget and made it available to the economic development agencies to support incumbent worker training for new firms coming to the area. Though the WIB has notified the EDAs of the availability of these training funds, they have yet to be used. The WIB has worked closely with the economic development agencies on a special initiative to support workforce development and training in the health care sector. The WIB has two representatives from local economic development agencies on its 43-member board.

**III. Falls Church SkillSource Center**

**Background.** The Falls Church SkillSource Center is one of two full-service, state-certified One-Stop Centers serving LWIB XI. There are also five other satellite One-Stop Centers that serve various locations in the three-county service area. The Falls Church One-Stop Center is located in a facility operated by Fairfax County and primarily serves residents of Fairfax, County. The facility, which also houses a range of public assistance programs (such as TANF...
and Food Stamps), was opened in the late 1990s specifically to facilitate meeting the employment goals mandated by the welfare reform changes of 1996. The close partnership with the County at this site has meant that the WIA programs have been able to build on the capacity and resources available on-site to expand and improve the effectiveness of WIA services. The County has invested significant resources in on-site employment programs and dedicates staff time and resources to deliver services that overlap with the WIA programs.

**One-Stop Center Funding.** No data were readily available at the time of our visit, but the overall budget for the SkillSource Center was estimated by administrators at about $1 million. Because the One-Stop Center is located within a Fairfax government-leased facility, no rent is paid by the WIB to cover space devoted to One-Stop operations. With WIA funding shrinking, the WIB is actively looking to other grant sources and partnering agencies to fund personnel positions working out of the One-Stop Center. Although there are only three full-time WIA-funded staff at the SkillSource Center, grants from other programs run by the County increase the capacity of the One-Stop to serve additional populations and provide a wider range of services. The additional non-WIA grants that the SkillSource Group runs also help increase the capacity to operate WIA programs. The staff that operate the WIA programs stated that it would be very challenging to serve clients solely using WIA funds, especially in an area with such a large population and high volume of clients seeking services.

**One-Stop Center Staffing.** The SkillSource Center has a total of 22 staff, which includes three WIA-funded staff. Other staff are funded by Fairfax County or by the agencies from which they are outstationed. The Manager of the SkillSource Center is also the Program Manager of Fairfax County Employment and Training programs. Five staff run One-Stop Center operations – a Manager, two career counselors, and two Center “greeters”. The One-Stop Center houses a Business Services team with three staff – a Manager and two job developers. Three staff focus almost exclusively on case management – a Manager and two Case Managers. Finally, three staff run the Youth Program. The staff that are fully or partially funded by the WIA program provide a full range of core, intensive and training services.

**Engaging and Serving Job Seekers at the One-Stop Center.** Staff estimate that there are a total of 8,000-10,000 customer visits to the Falls Church SkillSource Center each year and that there are about 4,000 unduplicated customers served each year. The majority of those served are unemployed, although the SkillSource Center also provides services that attract full- and part-time employed workers interested in upgrading or changing jobs. Although the Center does not track how clients learn about their services, staff say they see many clients who heard about services from someone else who has used services. Clients are also referred directly from other human service programs operating out of the same building as the One-Stop Center, such as TANF and Food Stamps. Clients on public assistance are frequently referred for help with meeting their TANF or VIEW work requirements. Clients also find out about services from area nonprofit and community-based organizations.

Several of the key services available at the SkillSource One-Stop Center are briefly highlighted below:

*LWIA XI – Northern Virginia*
**Intake and Core Services.** One-Stop Center staff indicate that a new process for how clients move between services, implemented in the winter of 2005, resulted in a more efficient and effective customer flow through various services available within the One-Stop Center. The Center has developed functional teams that provide distinctive set of services instead of the previous arrangement of overlapping services offered by various staff. In accordance with WIA guidelines, services are offered in a sequential manner, with clients accessing core services before being referred to intensive and training services (if necessary).

Clients are first offered a range of services designated as core services. Visitors are first approached by a Greeter as they enter the Center. The Greeter plays a vital role in helping customers to understand available services and matching customers to needed services. They welcome the client and inquire about needs. All clients are first asked to sign in to an automated database at the walk-in computers near the entrance. This database collects basic demographic information on each client. Clients who do not wish to give their Social Security number are assigned another identification number. The database also collects their email address that the One-Stop Center uses to send information on job openings and events. Clients who cannot use a computer are given a paper form to complete.

The SkillSource Center features a reception area, a Resource room with self-service computers, several larger meeting rooms (where workshops can be conducted), and several rooms and cubicles where staff meet with customers one-on-one. The reception area is designed so that customers can walk in and readily find written information on services, interact easily with greeters (who can direct them to services and answer questions), and find and use the technology in the resource room. Typically, all new customers are given a tour of the facility after they sign in and are informed of the various services available at the One-Stop Center.

Core services include access to all the resources of the Resource room but also extend to short needs assessments with One-Stop staff. Most of the core services can be accessed independently. These include access to local and regional labor market information via the LMIS system available on the computers in the Resource Room. In addition, there are listings of job openings on several boards at the One-Stop Center. Clients are also told about classes and workshops offered at the Center for preparing resumes, developing interviewing and workplace professional skills, acquiring technological skills in working with the Microsoft Suite, and GED classes and testing are available on-site. In addition to the self-directed services and information offered by the greeter, clients can see other One-Stop staff that will assess their eligibility and suitability for WIA-funded intensive and training services.

**Intensive Services and Training.** The Career Center staff shares the initial assessment with either of two Case Managers at the One-Stop Center. Together, the case managers determine whether to refer clients to intensive services. Clients may be seen immediately by a Case Manager or set up an appointment. These clients typically have some barriers
to employment that Career Counselors think may be overcome with some additional guidance or preparation. Clients that show some motivation or commitment to finding work are more likely to be referred to intensive services. Intensive services may include a range of services designed to make job seekers more likely to get a job or move to a better job, and offering supportive services that the client may need along the way. A Case Manager offers closer guidance and coaching such as reviewing or help revising a person’s resume, assessing whether a jobseeker’s skills are appropriate for their goals, more targeted job searches, or referrals for basic skills workshops or classes. Almost all intensive services clients are assessed using Career Scope or another testing tool that indicates interest and aptitude that would help both the client and Counselor strategize to find employment. Finally, clients are also referred to a range of supportive services (as needed) including child care, transportation, health care, and drug and alcohol services. Case Managers say they are knowledgeable about the range of supportive services located in the same building and inform clients where to go.

The Case Managers that provide intensive services also manage a budget for training services. Training is usually offered to clients who have a set of qualifications but are missing a particular skill, package of skills, or certificate that would help them become more employable or increase their wages. Training may be offered through WIA training vouchers (also referred to as ITAs). In addition, participants may be referred to On-the-Job Training slots at local employers (under which a portion of wages are subsidized for up to 3 months). Case Managers closely assess clients before referring them to training. Clients who are successful in their training plans lead to positive performance measures that help the Center meet their performance standards. The training may be offered by a state-approved training provider within the LWIB area with whom the WIB already has an agreement. Most clients are referred to Northern Virginia Community College, as staff perceive that the quality of training is good and the price is desirable. Training may be short-term or long-term, but usually does not cost more than $3,500 per client.

**Engaging and Serving Employers at the One-Stop Center.** The Northern Virginia WIB places strong emphasis on outreach to and services for the nearly 17,000 businesses in its three-county service area (of Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince Williams Counties). A business services group – with a staff of three – works out of the Falls Church SkillSource Employment Center. In addition, the Center for Business Planning and Development also operates out of the Falls Church SkillSource Center to provide resources and technical assistance to emerging entrepreneurs and existing businesses throughout Northern Virginia (see below details). The WIB has recently released a glossy “Business Services Guide,” which is a 10-page folder distributed widely to businesses that summarizes the main services available to businesses.

While operating out of the Falls Church SkillSource Center (in Fairfax County), the business services unit is responsible for providing a wide range of services to employers throughout the three-county area. The main business services provided are the following:

- **On-Site Recruitment and Placement Assistance for Employers** – This service allows participating employers to use a SkillSource Center to interview potential job candidates. It is especially aimed at employers hiring large numbers of job seekers for entry-level
positions. Some of the employers who have recently used SkillSource facilities for on-site recruitment include: CVS Pharmacy, Verizon, Safeway, Marriott Corporation, New World Tours, Transportation Security Administration, TREX Corporation, HMS Host, United Parcel Service, and Macy's. Among the advantages of this service for employers is that the SkillSource Center staff conducts recruitment and pre-screening of applicants to meet hiring criteria set by the employer. Typically, several employers come each week to the SkillSource Centers serving the three counties to conduct on-site recruitments.

- **Northern Virginia Labor Market Information System (LMIS)** – The information in the LMIS is based on the 2005 Regional Survey of Employers in the Northern Virginia Business Community, as well as national data provided by USJobs.com. The website for the system was created to provide employers with information about skill sets, labor market trends, and salary information to help them find the right candidates to fit their needs. Comprehensive information includes: (1) real-time trends, skill sets and salaries for the Washington, D.C. Metro area and nationwide to help you plan your hiring; (2) hiring trends, length of time to fill positions and detailed information on benefits offered based on solid research; and (3) resources from staffing agencies to childcare and local One-Stop offices. Employers can post job openings and job announcements online and then automatically receive notifications of potential applicants via email. Job seekers can post their resumes to this system, so that they can be retrieved and easily reviewed by employers.

- **Customized Occupational Skills Training for New Hires** – SkillSource Centers can arrange for customized training of new employees hired through its Centers. If an employer agrees to hire an eligible job seeker, the Center may pay for the approved cost of occupational skills training on behalf of the employer. Training can be arranged for a wide range of occupations, including: clerical/administrative support, medical assistants, medical coders, paralegals, dental assistants, certified nursing assistants, computer networking specialists and programmers, help desk technicians, construction workers and many more. Customized training differs from On-the-Job Training (OJT) in that it is generally delivered in a classroom setting before or after normal work hours. Training may also occur prior to the official start date of the new employee. Customized training must be requested, approved, and arranged prior to the start of employment. SkillSource Centers can also assist employers with selecting an appropriate training provider from its certified vendor list.

- **Rapid Response Services for Employers** – The Northern Virginia SkillSource Centers, in cooperation with, and through the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC), frequently assist with Rapid Response Services available through the state and delivered at the local level. Services are designed to help employers manage the multiple priorities created by a layoff at no cost. VEC has a designated Rapid Response Team to provide employment transition information to dislocated workers covered by the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act. The information provided typically identifies resources and services available for career planning, classroom training opportunities, financial guidance, job placement assistance, unemployment benefits, stress counseling, and more.
The business resources unit at the SkillSource Center also administers the Federal Bonding Program (which provides individual fidelity bonds to employers for job applicants such as ex-offenders who may be denied coverage by commercial carriers and the Work Opportunity Tax Credit and Welfare-to-Work Tax Credit). Both of these programs provide significant tax credits to employers who hire public assistance recipients.

The WIB has made a strong commitment to assist in the formation of new businesses in Northern Virginia through its support of the Center for Business Planning and Development. This initiative is a partnership among the Northern Virginia WIB, the Business Development Assistance Group (a non-profit organization that staffs this initiative), and the Fairfax County Department of Family Services. The mission of the Center for Business Planning and Development is to provide resources and technical assistance to emerging entrepreneurs and existing businesses throughout Northern Virginia. The Center — with three of its five staff working out of the SkillSource Center in Falls Church — offers extensive labor market information, business print publications, reference materials and other resources in a variety of languages. Workshops are conducted on a wide range of topics including: How to Start a Business; Writing a Business Plan; Introduction to Entrepreneurship; and Cash Flow Analysis and Financial Planning. One-on-one counseling services are also available to help prospective entrepreneurs in identifying the steps that are needed to start a business and to provide technical assistance in essential operational and legal procedures.

Finally, the Fairfax County SkillSource Centers and the Center for Business Planning and Development have sponsored a Career and Entrepreneurial Expo the last two years. The recently held Expo was attended by 1,800 job seekers and 56 employers. One of the unique aspects of this Expo is that the SkillSource Centers have been successful in securing sponsorships from employers ranging from $300 to $10,000 to offset costs of running this Expo.

**One-Stop Center Partnering.** The following partners have staff outstationed to the Falls Church SkillSource Center – the VEC; DRS (1 FTE); Arlington Diocese (.75 FTE); Service Source (a non-profit organization providing disability services, (.75 FTE); and Child Support Enforcement. One-Stop administrators at the Falls Church SkillSource Center identified the following agencies as most engaged with the One-Stop system:

- Fairfax County Government – pays rent for the One-Stop facility in Falls Church;
- Fairfax County Schools – provide adult education services, including GED testing and GED preparation classes;
- Offender Aid and Restoration (OAR) – provides employment services for the area’s ex-offender population;
- Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) – assesses the need for vocational rehabilitation services at the One-Stop and then refers individuals for services to DRS vendors;
- Office of Child Support Enforcement (CSE) – outstations a representative once a week to the One-Stop Center to help with child support related problems/services;
- Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) – a outstations a VEC worker to the SkillSource Center three or four days a week to register individuals for the Employment
Service and to connect these individuals with available job openings, work readiness services, and a range of other services available through the VEC; and,

- Center for Business Planning and Development – provides range of business services to foster formation of small businesses and also help with mounting an annual Career Expo.

Many other county agencies operate out of the same building as the Falls Church SkillSource Center (e.g., TANF and VIEW programs), and therefore it is very easy for One-Stop staff to refer individuals to a variety of county-administered social service programs.

In terms of maintaining coordination at the One-Stop Career Center level, a Complete Quality Initiative (CQI) Team is comprised of both Center and partner agency staff. This CQI team meets regularly (usually monthly) or at the call of the CQI Chairperson to share information and to discuss Center policies and program implementation.

IV. Challenges and Interesting/Promising Practices

The WIB and One-Stop face several challenges to providing services and meeting the needs of job seekers and employers, including the following:

- **Increasing Difficulties in Engaging the Local VEC/Job Service in Partnering on One-Stop Service Delivery.** One of the current challenges to the WIB is that local VEC/Job Service is “pulling away” from engagement with the WIB and SkillSource One-Stop system. One of the two state-certified, full-service One-Stops operating in the LWIB’s service area – operated by the VEC (and primarily serving Prince William County) – has indicated that it will no longer be part of the accreditation process run by the WIB (which is separate from the state’s accreditation process) and will no longer be part of the WIB’s SkillSource system.

- **Some Challenges Faced in Engaging Employers.** The main challenge faced by the WIB and the SkillSource Centers in working with employers has been to change their “mind set” about the types of job seekers that use the SkillSource Centers. Because the SkillSource Center in Falls Church is located in a county building (which also offers a range of other social services for low-income and disadvantaged individuals), some employers view the One-Stop Center as a social service agency.

- **Maintaining Continuity of Service Delivery in One-Stop System.** Within the One-Stop system, one of the biggest challenges of partnering is that whenever staff outstationed from other organizations to the One-Stop leave their jobs, their replacements are often not knowledgeable about how the One-Stop system operates, and therefore must be trained about the concepts behind and operations of the One-Stop. It is sometimes difficult to maintain continuity and quality of services if there are frequent changes in partner staff outstationed to the One-Stop.

- **Space Constraints at the One-Stop Limit Outstationing of Staff by Partners.** A challenge to expanding partnerships and encouraging these partners to outstation staff is
that Falls Church SkillSource Center is already very crowded with both staff and customers, so little additional office space is available to accommodate more outstationed staff.

- **Challenges Understanding WIA Performance Standards.** It has not been easy to convey to One-Stop staff how WIA performance standards work and how decisions made about enrollment and services can impact the performance of the WIB. In addition, there is a lag of at least three quarters after services are delivered to fully measure performance. Thus, performance data are provided well after-the-fact and staff delivering services have a tough time gauging if they are meeting WIA performance goals. The WIB and One-Stop staff are also not always certain that the data generated by the state system fully and accurately reflect local performance – and there is no easy way of checking at an individual record level the aggregate statistics generated by the state on local WIA performance measures.

- **Lack of Funding to Establish Stronger Partnerships and Provide Services.** One of the most serious problems faced by the WIB and the One-Stop is that the WIA formula funding does not come close to meeting the demand for services in the local area. The major challenge of the WIB has been meeting increasing WIA state and federal requirements and demands while experiencing significant budget reductions or frozen budget levels across the WIA funding streams. For example, between 2004 to 2005, funds allocated to Northern Virginia were reduced by 19 percent in the Adult Program and by 12 percent in Dislocated Worker program. The WIB has responded to this by restructuring its management model and becoming more entrepreneurial to secure addition grant funding to expand and enhance partnerships and direct services.

The Northern Virginia WIB and Falls Church One-Stop Center feature several interesting and promising practices:

- **Change of the Northern Virginia WIB from Public to Non-Profit Organization to Create Greater Flexibility for Seeking Additional Funding Sources.** When Virginia implemented the Workforce Investment Act in 2000, Fairfax County served as the fiscal agent for the WIB. As such, the county was responsible for administering and distributing funds for WIB initiatives and WIA One-Stop operations, as well as oversight of program activities. In January 2005, SkillSource Group, Inc., a separate non-profit 501(c)(3) organization created by the WIB, replaced Fairfax County as the fiscal agent for workforce activities in the area. A primary motivation behind the creation of the new SkillSource non-profit organization was to bring in more funds and expand services beyond WIA-eligible populations. Staff said that trying to serve a broad demand with only WIA funding has been a longstanding challenge for the Northern Virginia WIB. Non-profit status allows the WIB staff to raise additional revenue and resources, accept corporate donations, expand and enhance program services, and serve populations that do not meet WIA eligibility guidelines.

- **Emphasis on Meeting Needs of Local Employers and Fostering Small Business Development.** The WIB places strong emphasis on engaging employers and has taken
various approaches to providing services to area businesses. The workforce area’s Strategic Plan defines businesses alongside job seekers as the primary customers of the workforce system. As discussed in greater detail earlier, the WIB has provided leadership for a new training voucher and On-the-Job Training Program; developed a new Customized Training Program and recruited employer participation; increased collaboration with the Virginia Employment Commission to study and identify priority areas of employment; and supported the new Center for Business Planning and Development, which provides resources and technical assistance to emerging entrepreneurs and existing businesses across Northern Virginia. Finally, for the last four years, the Fairfax County SkillSource Centers and the Center for Business Planning and Development has sponsored a Career and Entrepreneurial Expo. During the 2005 Expo, a total of 56 employers paid sponsorships (ranging from $300 to $10,000) for exhibit booths in the main hall, to advertise in the event program, and a range of other benefits. In addition, a total of 1,800 job seekers attended this event and were able to learn about job opportunities available at the sponsoring companies.

**Strong Local Partnership Between Workforce Development and Economic Development Systems.** As discussed in greater detail earlier, the Northern Virginia WIB has particularly strong linkages with the six economic development agencies that serve the three-county area. The WIB subleases space from the economic development agency that serves Fairfax County and is located on the same floor as this agency. Because of their co-location with the Fairfax County Economic Development Agency (EDA), the WIB Director and staff are in frequent discussions with staff from this agency. WIB administrators consider the economic development agencies as “strategic partners” and support the efforts of the EDAs to attract new businesses to the area. The WIB has pursued (and will continue to pursue) new grants in collaboration with the EDAs. The WIB has also carved out $35,000 from its budget and made it available to the economic development agencies to support incumbent worker training for new firms coming to the area. The WIB has worked closely with the economic development agencies on a special initiative to support workforce development and training in the health care sector. Finally, the WIB has two representatives from its local economic development agencies on its 43-member board.

**Establishment of Automated Database to Provide Up-to-Date LMI for Employers and Job Seekers.** This specialized LMIS was developed in collaboration with LWIA 12 and provides employers with information about skill sets, labor market trends, and salary information to help employers find job candidates that fit their needs. Information includes: (1) real-time trends, skill sets and salaries for the Washington, D.C. Metro area and nationwide to help employers plan hiring; (2) hiring trends, length of time to fill positions and detailed information on benefits offered based on solid research; and (3) resources from staffing agencies to childcare and local One-Stop offices to help make this site comprehensive. Employers can post job opening/job announcement(s) via the internet and then automatically receive notifications of potential applicants via email. Job seekers can post their resumes to this system, so that they can be retrieved and easily reviewed by employers.

_LWIA XI – Northern Virginia_
I. Introduction

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) authorizes funds to provide the employment and training services of various programs and organizations through a system of One-Stop Career Centers. These One-Stop Career Centers (referred to as Virginia Workforce Centers in the Commonwealth of Virginia) provide a range of employment, training, education and supportive services funded under WIA, Wagner-Peyser, and a variety of other programs. The programs and services provided through One-Stop Career Centers – and the public and private sector organizations delivering services – vary substantially across Centers and are intended to be tailored to the unique needs, environment, and characteristics of each locality. The Virginia Workforce Centers operate under the guidance of the Virginia Workforce Council and Workforce Investment Boards in sixteen Workforce Investment Areas across the Commonwealth.

This report is intended to highlight and assess local operations of the Arlington/Alexandria Workforce Investment Board (WIB), with a particular focus on operations of the full-service, certified One-Stop Career Center (referred to as a JobLink Center) in Alexandria. Report findings are based on a one-day site visit to interview administrators and staff at the Arlington/Alexandria WIB and the Alexandria JobLink Center, supplemented by readily available documentation and data.

II. Local Workforce Investment Board (WIB) Service Area and Operations

**Background.** The Arlington/Alexandria Workforce Investment Board (WIB) carries out the activities and services of the workforce investment system in the City of Alexandria and Arlington County, with a combined population of about 320,000 residents. The WIB was formed by and operates in accordance with an interjurisdictional agreement between
the Arlington County Board and the Alexandria City Council. The agreement, entered into in 2000, complies with WIA requirements for the establishment of a Board and ensures that the two jurisdictions that form the workforce area have approximately equal representation. The two jurisdictions have a long history of collaboration on workforce development programs, having worked in partnership as the Alexandria/Arlington Workforce Development Consortium since the enactment of the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) in 1989. The Consortium is responsible for setting the vision and developing an agenda for a local workforce investment plan and appoints Board members.

The geographic area served is relatively small, but is densely populated (with a population of about 320,000 residents). Arlington County and the City of Alexandria, a short commute from Washington DC, have in recent years been characterized by low unemployment (about half that of the nation as a whole) and rapid job formation. There is minimal manufacturing employment. Instead, many local residents are employed in service sector and in jobs for the federal government and/or firms that contract with the federal government. The population within the local area is diverse, with many new immigrants. Despite relatively low rates of unemployment, there have been dislocations related to military base realignments and downsizing in the airline industry.

**WIB Staffing and Operations.** The WIB is staffed by an Executive Director, a Manager, and other administrative staff who share time with other city/county human service programs. The staff to the WIB are located in the Arlington Department of Human Services (DHS) building, which also is the main location in Arlington County where residents go to obtain county human services (such as TANF, Food Stamps, and Medicaid). The WIB is comprised of 42 members, half of which are appointed by the Arlington County Board and half by the Mayor of Alexandria.

The Arlington/Alexandria workforce area includes two full-service certified comprehensive One-Stop Centers (*JobLink Center in Alexandria and the Arlington Employment Center*), and one satellite center with a limited set of services in the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) field office in Alexandria. The full-service One-Stop Centers provide a wide range of services to an estimated 1,500 to 2,000 (unduplicated count) customers each year. A small number of these customers – about 75 individuals each year – are enrolled in WIA Adult or Dislocated Worker intensive or training services.

WIA activities are aligned with city and county priorities on many levels, and in turn the One-Stop Centers are able to leverage a significant amount of local funds committed to serving the workforce needs of the community. Both One-Stop Centers are located in local government human service buildings and benefit from staff, infrastructure and program resources dedicated to serving low- and moderate-income residents. The WIB (and staff to the board) plays several roles in promoting and enhancing the provision of employment and training services locally, particularly through its two full-service One-Stop Career Centers. The WIB, along with Local Elected Officials, licenses and certifies One-Stop Centers within the local workforce area. Though the state has a certification process for all sites offering WIA services, the Arlington/Alexandria WIB established its
own separate criteria for certifying service provider locations to ensure that management processes and services at each One-Stop Center follow the Board’s policies and quality standards. This practice preceded state implementation of Tier II certification and may undergo some modification once Tier II certification has been in place long enough to compare the relative advantages and disadvantages of having both certification processes in place. Licensing and certification criteria do not apply to designated satellite locations that only offer a limited set of services. The WIB also assists the One-Stop Centers in meeting the requirements for the state’s Tier I and II certifications.

The WIB monitors the performance of the two One-Stop Centers and oversees program improvements when a One-Stop Center fails to meet agreed-upon standards. However, staff explained that they find it very difficult to track and measure performance of the Centers based on data collected by the state’s MIS. Although One-Stop staff collect and enter customer information into the state’s system, once entered, neither WIB nor One-Stop Center staff are able to access performance reports with sufficient detail or in a manner that is timely for making adjustments and improvements during a given performance period. They are aware that the state is purchasing new software for performance measurement. Staff at both levels are hopeful that the new system will give them access to more useful information for timely identification of performance deficiencies that will in turn help WIB and One-Stop staff better manage their programs. On a quarterly basis, the WIB Executive Director and Manager meet with the One-Stop Center Directors to discuss operational and funding issues and coordination.

**WIB Funding.** The Arlington/Alexandria Consortium budget is approximately $7.4 million. Local government is the largest source of funding, a unique feature of this LWIA. WIA funds make up only a relatively small portion of the total budget – for example, Program Year (PY) 2006 WIA funding for Adult, Youth, and Dislocated Workers (planning estimate) is $471,899, slightly less than the PY 2005 allocation of $502,690 while the City of Alexandria and Arlington County provided $4.3 million. Recently, the WIB received a $400,000 National Emergency Grant (NEG) aimed at providing reemployment services for nearly 3,000 workers displaced in the airline industry, including nearly 1,000 pilots.

A challenge for the WIB in recent years has been meeting increasing federal requirements and demand for services for job seekers, while experiencing a slow decline in WIA funds. In part because of the relatively small and declining share of WIA funding received, the WIB has increasingly sought other sources of funding. It received funding through the state to provide employment and retention services for TANF Virginia Initiative for Employment not Welfare (VIEW) participants. The Consortium was also one of six WIBs in the Commonwealth to receive funding to respond to Base Realignment and Closing (BRAC) worker dislocations.

The WIB has focused more on having partner program staff represented at the One-Stops than on receiving cash contributions from the partner agencies. This in-kind assistance may include having a presence on-site, developing and conducting workshops at the Centers or donating resources for job fairs. Staff maintain that partners are also
functioning on tight budgets. Instead, the WIB occasionally has applied for grants in partnership with groups they already work with, including the Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC) system and the adjacent Northern Virginia WIB.

**WIB Partnering.** The Consortium is able to maintain a similar level of services at the two full-service One-Stop Centers by virtue of strong support provided by both Arlington and Alexandria local governments. The operations of the WIB and One-Stop Centers have been strongly supported by and connected to the human service programs operated by the local county governments. For example, TANF and its work program (VIEW) operate out of the same buildings as the two full-service One-Stop Centers. In addition, the WIB has strong links to NVCC. The WIB has cultivated close ties with the economic development agencies serving the local area. The economic development agencies are represented on the local WIB and the WIB Executive Director meets typically on a weekly basis with representatives of the local economic development agencies.

### III. Alexandria JobLink Center Operations

**Background.** The JobLink Center is located in a large facility owned and operated by the City of Alexandria that houses a broad range of public assistance, employment and training, and community service programs. The JobLink Center maintains its own budget, but is well integrated with the variety of social services offered on-site. The City invests in a number of programs involved in workforce development at the JobLink Center. The additional resources generated by the City’s direct support of the JobLink as well as locating in a building with close access to and cooperation with partner staff greatly expands the functions of the Center. Customers that visit JobLink are offered a broad range of services within the Center and via referral to co-located staff from other programs.

**One-Stop Center Funding.** The JobLink Center combines funding from local government, state programs, state and federal grants and a small amount in donations totaling $3.2 million for program year 2006. WIA formula funds comprise only about 7 percent ($230,000) of this budget. WIA funds are divided between the Adult ($67,000), Dislocated Worker ($78,000), and Youth ($64,000) programs, and an additional $20,000 for administrative costs. The primary source of support for the JobLink Center is the $1.8 million (over 50 percent) the City provides from General Funds. The largest program run from the JobLink Center is the VIEW program. The budget also includes funding from a BRAC grant, the Virginia Refugee Resettlement Program, the Food Stamps Employment and Training (FSET) program, the Title V Senior Community Service Employment Program, and a TANF grant to provide job readiness training and support for hard-to-serve VIEW clients. The WIA program operates rent-free, and the utility costs and most of the computers and technology available in the JobLink Resource Area are also supported by City funds.

**One-Stop Center Staffing.** The JobLink One-Stop Center has a staff of about 40, most of whom are employees of the City of Alexandria. Of these, only three staff positions are
solely funded by the WIA program – the supervisors of the Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs, respectively. The JobLink Director is a City employee. Several city-paid staff work in the JobLink Resource Area, including: two Greeters, a Receptionist, an Administrative staff person, and two Employment Training Specialists (who work with core clients mainly to help them find jobs). Two full-time staff are also available to assist clients with disabilities. Two staff from the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) and Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) are outstationed part-time to work out of the JobLink Center.

**Engaging and Serving Job Seekers at the One-Stop Center.** For the period April 2005 through March 2006, the Center received nearly 11,000 customer visits, equal to about 900 visits each month. For the program year ending in June 2005, the JobLink Center served an unduplicated count of 3,900 job seekers and 647 employers. According to data collected by the Center’s customer registration system, 40 percent of customers have a high school education, followed by 30 percent with less than a high school education, and 15 percent with some years of college. The customer base of the JobLink Center is mostly minority: 63 percent are African American; 13 percent are White; 10 percent are Hispanic and two percent are Asian Pacific Islander.

The JobLink Center hired a marketing firm to develop marketing tools geared separately for two audiences: employers and job seekers. This firm created a set of glossy, artful brochures that describe the purpose of the JobLink Center, the services available, and their service philosophy. A 20-minute video also highlights key features and services available through the JobLink Center. A second shorter video outlines youth services available through the TeensWork! program. Staff distribute the brochures and show the videos at events and meetings to draw attract customers as well as to educate employers and other community groups about the JobLink Center. The brochures and video area paid for by the City of Alexandria Department of Human Services (DHS) and feature the logos of both DHS and the JobLink Center. Staff mentioned that due to funding reductions they are no longer able to maintain previous marketing efforts, which included TV spots and ads on buses.

Several key services available at the Alexandria JobLink One-Stop Center are briefly highlighted below:

- **Intake and Core Services.** In accordance with WIA guidelines, services are offered in a sequential manner, with customers accessing core services before being referred to intensive and training services (if necessary). Visitors are first met by a “Greeter” as they enter the JobLink Center’s reception area. The Greeter plays an important role in helping customers to understand available services and matching customers to needed services. They welcome the customer and inquire about needs. All customers are first asked to sign into an automated database at the walk-in computers near the entrance. This database collects basic demographic information on each client. Customers who cannot use a computer are given a paper form to complete. Typically, all clients are then given a tour of the facility and informed of the various services available at the JobLink Center.
The reception area is designed so that customers can walk in and readily find written information on services, interact easily with greeters, and find and use the technology in the Resource Area.

The JobLink Center offers universal access to core services through a Resource Area as well as dedicated staff that guide customers through the Resource Area and provide a more structured but limited set of job preparation and job search help. The Resource Area is the most used space at JobLink. The room features access to computers with internet access, word processing, telephones, printer, copier and fax machines, as well as tutorials on how to use computer services. Job search is facilitated by the computer-based Labor Market Information System (LMIS), newspapers, the resource library, and featured job vacancy listings on a board. There are also rooms available where jobseekers can meet with employers individually.

Aside from the Resource Area, JobLink has another computer room with advanced technology that is used to conduct workshops, occasionally host teleconferences, and where customers can take interactive tutorials. In addition to the core services that can be accessed independently, staff can also provide one-on-one help to create a resume, write cover letters, and complete job applications. Specialized staff are also available to help clients with disabilities navigate assistive technology at the Resource Area.

JobLink especially distinguishes itself by the range and intensity of services it can offer to clients who are not enrolled in WIA. The Employment Training Specialist, a City employee, provides services that are similar to those provided in the Resource Area but with a more structured needs assessment and approach. The Specialist typically develops an Individualized Employment Plan. The Specialist can also refer clients for assessment using one of two vocational assessment tools, PESCO or CareerScope. Some JobLink staff are professionally trained to administer both assessments. The information on aptitude and interest from these assessment tests is then used to help the client outline employment goals and a service plan tailored to individual needs.

The Employment Training Specialist can also offer a client basic skills enhancement through a course or tutorial system that teaches Microsoft desktop software applications. Courses on basic computer skills are offered monthly in the Resource Area. In the last year, the Center has also hosted the DECO (Digital Enrichment Co-operative) program and the ARMHS Connections to Self-Sufficiency Project. Customers that lack specific computer skills can also access hundreds of interactive training tutorials on-site at JobLink. The service, provided free-of-charge, is offered through the City’s Community Digital Divide Initiative (CDDI), which aims to close the technology gap for underserved Alexandria residents. The City purchased the technology and uses multiple education and training grants to pay for individual customers to receive the training and completion certificates.
**Intensive Services and Training.** The Employment Training Specialist may refer customers who need more individualized, long-term and intensive intervention to achieve their employment goals to one of two Account Managers for the WIA program. These may include clients with multiple barriers to work, including TANF or VIEW participants, ex-offenders, high school dropouts, and individuals with substance abuse problems. The Account Managers, who function as case managers for both the Adult Program and Dislocated Worker program, enroll clients into the appropriate WIA program. The Account Managers offer customers a more comprehensive set of services, strategically address multiple facets of a customer’s job prospects, and develop a more in-depth Individualized Employment Plan.

Intensive services include a range of programming designed to make job seekers more likely to get a job or move to a better job, and offers a range of supportive services that the client may need along the way. The Account Managers estimate that the majority of clients are given one of the vocational assessment tests. The results of the assessment become the basis for the Employment Plan. For some clients, the focus is on acquisition of a skills certificate that will improve their job prospects in one of the high-growth or in-demand areas of the local labor market. The Account Managers are responsible for developing and maintaining relationships with employers, and thus have knowledge of the demands and skill sets necessary for various high growth jobs in the local labor market. They also have connections with employers in some of these areas, which can be helpful in job preparation and job placement.

Account Managers can also refer clients to skills-building workshops, tutorials and classes that are available at JobLink. In addition to the Microsoft tutorials, DECO and the ARMS course, another tutorial provides instruction on construction-related skills. The cost of participation and certification through these programs and classes is almost always paid for through a combination of grants managed by the City. Finally, clients are also referred to a range of supportive services (as needed) including child care, transportation, health care, and drug and alcohol services. Account Managers say they are knowledgeable about the range of supportive services located in the same building and inform clients about where to go to access them.

If a customer is deemed appropriate for training, an Account Manager works with the customer to identify potential training providers and training programs. There are a very large number of training providers and programs to choose from in the Northern Virginia area. Once the training options have been identified and agreed upon, an Individual Training Account (ITA) is awarded. The maximum amount on the ITA is $3,000 and the time limit for use is 18 months. Only a small number of customers are enrolled in WIA-sponsored training. There are no customers involved in on-the-job training (OJT). Once the customer is involved
in training, WIA staff make bi-weekly contact with the client to check on their progress in training.

**Engaging and Serving Employers at the One-Stop Center.** JobLink places high priority on developing relationships with area employers in and near Alexandria that will benefit job-seeking clients. Account Managers are the primary contact for employers that do business with JobLink. The Center estimates that about 650 employers were provided at least one service or resource through JobLink in the past program year. Services are marketed primarily by these staff through the JobLink Center. They distribute brochures geared towards employers that describe how the JobLink Center works with businesses. The Managers also directly contact employers to inquire about their job openings and labor market needs and promote how JobLink resources can help them. Each year, JobLink staff also reach out to newly licensed businesses.

JobLink staff make a special effort to project a professional, business-like image to the employer community “so that it feels like a business operation.” At times, JobLink staff interviewed for this study reported feeling that they need to work particularly hard at overcoming perceptions that because the Center is located in the same building where Alexandria residents go to obtain other human services, it is just another social service agency. In their interactions with local businesses, JobLink staff emphasize the business-like atmosphere of the JobLink Center and the opportunity for area businesses to find motivated, skilled job applicants.

The JobLink Center is operating in a local labor market that has maintained a healthy unemployment rate of under 3 percent for the past several years. Low unemployment rates create a favorable climate for reaching out to employers and encourage them to hire workers through the JobLink Center. While many of those served through JobLink have skills and work experience valued by area employers, JobLink staff still need to work hard to interest employers in those customers with basic skill deficiencies, minimal educational credentials (i.e., high school or post-secondary degrees), or a lack of prior job experience. Much of the demand in the local labor market is for jobs in sectors and occupations that require higher skill levels.

One important service provided by the JobLink Center is to allow employers to come on-site to recruit new workers. This service is especially aimed at employers hiring large numbers of job seekers for entry-level positions. Some employers who have recently used JobLink facilities for on-site recruitment include: Harris Teeter, Giant, Target, Yellow Cab, Embassy Suites Hotel and Jiffy Lube. Among the advantages of this service for employers is that JobLink staff have an existing pool of job candidates and pre-screen these candidates to meet hiring criteria set by the employer. JobLink also hosts specialized job fairs and recruitment events for specific employers at the facility. Finally, JobLink staff help with off-site employer recruitment events – for example, staff recently attended a special event to help with recruitment and screening assistance for businesses at the new Potomac Yards mall opening in Alexandria.
JobLink staff place great emphasis on providing employers (as well as job seekers) with up-to-date labor market information to inform recruitment efforts. The Northern Virginia WIB and the Alexandria/Arlington WIB have collaborated on a project to collect data on local businesses throughout Northern Virginia and create a labor market information system (known as ERISS). JobLink staff encourage both employers and job seekers to use this system. The website for ERISS (at www.usworks.com/NorthernVirginia) provides employers with information about skill sets, labor market trends, and salary information to help them find the right candidates to fit their needs. Comprehensive information includes: (1) real-time trends, skill sets and salaries for the Washington, D.C. Metro area and nationwide to help employers plan their hiring; (2) hiring trends, length of time to fill positions and detailed information on benefits offered based on solid research; and (3) resources from staffing agencies to childcare and local One-Stop offices. Employers can post job openings and job announcements online and then automatically receive notifications of potential applicants via email. Job seekers can post their resumes to this system, so that they can be retrieved and easily reviewed by employers.

One-Stop Center Partnering. The JobLink has signed MOUs with all of the mandatory partners and engages many of these partners in the delivery of services to One-Stop customers. Among those partners that regularly outstation staff to the JobLink Center are: (1) the local VEC office outstations one staff person one day a week to assist with Employment Service registration and referral to various reemployment services available through the VEC office; (2) DRS staff are outstationed at JobLink once a week to make quick assessments of disabilities of One-Stop customers and to refer appropriate individuals to services provided by DRS; (3) NVCC periodically sends a staff person to JobLink to provide information about education and training opportunities available at NVCC campuses in Northern Virginia; and (4) Virginia Cares outstations staff to the Center one day a week to provide information and referral services about program offerings. Some other critical Alexandria JobLink partners include: Alexandria Works! (a public assistance employment program); EAGLES, an employment program to prepare ex-offenders to find, maintain, and advance in employment; and the Virginia Refugee Resettlement Program, which provides employment programs and services for refugees, including career counseling, skills training, and English as a Second Language.

IV. Challenges and Interesting/Promising Practices

The Arlington/Alexandria WIB and Alexandria JobLink Center face several challenges to providing services and meeting the needs of job seekers and employers, including the following:

- Lack of Timely and Reliable Performance Data. Staff reported that an area of continuous difficulty is the poor quality, timeliness, and usefulness of the state’s performance management system, the Virginia Workforce Network (VWN). They explained that they would like to be able to use the database to assess their progress towards meeting performance standards throughout the year. More specifically, the Center would like to be able to view case records and query
specific information. The Network is reportedly both frustrating to enter information into and generally not helpful for accessing internal reports back on the inputted data.

- **Lack of WIA Funding** – A challenge to this WIB and One-Stop is that the WIA formula funding only covers a small amount of the total cost of One-Stop Center and workforce development operations. The low unemployment rate translates into a relatively small amount of WIA funding (the lowest level of funding of any of the 16 WIBs in the state for PY 2006). Despite relatively low levels of unemployment, there is still great need for enhancing skills of the local workforce to meet increasingly higher skill and knowledge requirements of employers. The WIB has responded to scarce WIA funding by supplementing WIA funding with general operating funds from local government and by becoming more entrepreneurial in securing additional grant funding to expand and enhance partnerships and direct services.

- **Lack of Engagement by Local VEC in One-Stop Operations.** The local VEC office largely runs its operation apart from the JobLink Center, in a separate office located at some distance from the Center. The main engagement of the local VEC with the JobLink Center is to outstation a Job Service worker one day per week at the Center to help with registering customers for the Employment Service and to provide information and referral services. As a result of this limited involvement, the JobLink Center has not been able to leverage additional resources from Wagner-Peyser funding and there is some duplication of job search services between the VEC local office and the JobLink Center.

The Arlington/Alexandria WIB and Alexandria JobLink Center feature several interesting and promising practices:

- **Strong Emphasis on Continuous Quality Improvement Process.** Although all LWIBs have relied on the Malcolm Baldridge Criteria for Performance Excellence for oversight, monitoring and continuous improvement, the the JobLink was notable in the level of staff enthusiasm and commitment to this internal performance management process system. Senior staff indicated this process has had a positive impact on the quality of services and level of innovation at the Center since it began in 2001 and that the process facilitates and improves cooperation and communication among staff at all levels. They also cited it for encouraging leadership and decision-making at all levels. The Center’s adoption of the Baldridge performance management process led to the creation of Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) system that brings staff and partners together to reach consensus on decisions, recommendations and program implementation. The monthly committee meetings, which all staff participate in, encourages consensus building and forces staff to regularly refer to the organization’s “mission, vision, goals and values.” Staff said that it has led to specific improvements including collection and analysis of customer and employer feedback, interior redesign of the Center to improve customer flow, and a more seamless service delivery system.
• **Strong Commitment to Serving Individuals with Disabilities.** A distinguishing feature of JobLink is its commitment and capacity to service individuals with disabilities. JobLink is both an approved “Employment Network” (EN) provider under the Ticket to Work (TtW) program, has two full-time staff trained and available to work with customers with disabilities as well as Department of Rehabilitative Services staff out-stationed part-time. A comprehensive array of assistive technology is also available to disabled customers that visit the Resource Area. Customers with disabilities are routed the same way as any JobLink jobseeker, but the additional technology allows them to access the full range of self-service or more intensive services. The level of services to disabled customers is reflective of the City of Alexandria’s priority to enhance services for the disabled population, particularly through the One-Stop system.

A substantial portion of the funding for assistive technology came from federal grants, which has led to increased cooperation between City agencies to help disabled customers access a range of benefits including: SSI, job placement assistance, and case management support. Some examples of the types of assistive technology available include: VRS (Video Relay Service); Lightwriter (a communication device which allows the deaf or speech impaired to communicate with others); Jaws (a computer program that converts text into speech to allow the blind to use a computer); Zoomtext (a computer program that enlarges images on a computer screen to allow the visually impaired to access a computer); Wynn (a computer program designed to simplify the use of a computer for individuals with Learning Disabilities); Dragon Naturally Speaking (a voice recognition software that allows the user to operate a computer using speech); Aladdin Ambassador Pro (a scanner that converts text into speech, so that the blind can access hard copy materials); CCTV (a device that enlarges hard copy material at close range, so that the visually impaired can read it); Video Magnifier (a video magnifier that allows a user to view the material on their desk and also view the black board); and many other specialized technologies and devices.

• **Collaboration with Employers on Training Initiatives in Demand Occupations.** The commitment to working closely with employers is exemplified in a new Automobile Training Institute of Alexandria (ATIA) initiative. This special training initiative with seven local automotive dealerships was established to address strong demand for reliable and skilled workers needed by the automobile industry to sustain economic stability and provide jobs within the communities they serve. JobLink surveyed area automobile dealers and repair shops to determine the extent of the shortage of qualified workers. Hiring managers at local auto dealerships confirmed the low numbers of trained or experienced workers available to fill vacancies, and many residents participating in the survey expressed enthusiasm for a training program to prepare them for jobs in the auto industry. With that information, DHS/JobLink brought together representatives of local automobile dealerships and repair shops, City
government, and the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership to begin planning the Automobile Training Institute of Alexandria. This initiative, with a $3 million budget when fully funded, is expected to train approximately 150 new workers per year to become certified mechanics. The curriculum includes many of the job skills and functions found in a typical sales and repair shop – for example, student workers learn not only how to fix cars but also how to write service orders, order and stock parts, and detail cars. The curriculum is designed to teach communication skills, team building, and other human relation skills required for providing excellent customer service. DHS/JobLink has partnered with NVCC, the City of Alexandria Public Schools, the Excel Institute, and the Center for Employment Training to ensure that job seekers requiring other related training have viable options for skill development. The dealerships partnering on this initiative have made a commitment to hire all successful graduates of this program.

- **Community Digital Divide Initiative (CDDI) – An On-Line Training Initiative.** The JobLink Center purchased licenses for Microsoft desktop applications and certification tutorials from Learn2University. Through its CDDI project, Alexandria residents have the opportunity to learn over 500 of the most commonly used Microsoft applications that are used by employers worldwide. Customers can enhance their current skill-set by participating in self-paced on-line training anytime, anyplace, anywhere (via the internet). JobLink has also invested in hardware for CDDI by constructing a network for partners to add to and expand the courseware library in the future to offer a wider variety of courses. CDDI partners who have on-line educational courses and/or training can make the information available via the internet (at [www.cddi.us](http://www.cddi.us)). The customer receives on-line training free-of-charge. The breakdown of cost is $100.00 per person and JobLink pays for the on-line tutorials through multiple grants programs that have allocated funds for education and training. Interested customers must come to JobLink and complete the registration and orientation process. Once an individual has registered as a JobLink customer, a team key is distributed for 24/7 access to the website.

- **Establishment of Automated Database to Provide Up-to-Date Labor Market Information (LMI) for Employers and Job Seekers.** This specialized LMIS was developed in collaboration with LWIA 11 and provides employers with information about skill sets, labor market trends, and salary information to help employers find job candidates that fit their needs. Information includes: (1) real-time trends, skill sets and salaries for the Washington, D.C. Metro area and nationwide to help employers plan hiring; (2) hiring trends, length of time to fill positions and detailed information on benefits offered based on solid research; and (3) resources from staffing agencies to childcare and local One-Stop offices to help make this site comprehensive. Employers can post job opening/job announcement(s) via the internet and then automatically receive notifications of potential applicants via email. Job seekers can post their resumes to this system, so that they can be retrieved and easily reviewed by employers.
MINI-ASSESSMENT OF ONE-STOP CAREER CENTER AND WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD (WIB) OPERATIONS – BAY CONSORTIUM WORKFORCE INVESTMENT AREA (LWIA XIII)

I. Introduction

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) authorizes funds to provide the employment and training services of various programs and organizations through a system of One-Stop Career Centers. These One-Stop Career Centers (referred to as Virginia Workforce Centers in the Commonwealth of Virginia) provide a range of employment, training, education and supportive services funded under WIA, Wagner-Peyser, and a variety of other programs. The programs and services provided through One-Stop Career Centers – and the public and private sector organizations delivering services – vary substantially across Centers and are intended to be tailored to the unique needs, environment, and characteristics of each locality. The Virginia Workforce Centers operate under the guidance of the Virginia Workforce Council and Workforce Investment Boards in sixteen Workforce Investment Areas across the Commonwealth.

This report is intended to highlight and assess local operations of the Bay Consortium Workforce Investment Board (WIB), with a particular focus on operations of the full-service, certified One-Stop Career Center in Warsaw. Report findings are based on a one-day site visit to interview administrators and staff at the Bay Consortium WIB and the Warsaw One-Stop Career Center, supplemented by readily available documentation and data.

II. Local Workforce Investment Board (WIB) Service Area and Operations

Background. Located in the Eastern portion of Virginia, the Bay Consortium LWIA is one of the largest workforce areas of the state geographically, encompassing a land area of 3,867 square miles and approximately 400,000 residents. This Bay WIB oversees operations across 15 jurisdictions served, including 15 counties (Accomack, Caroline, Essex, King and Queen, King George, King William, Lancaster, Mathews, Middlesex, Northampton, Northumberland, Richmond, Spotsylvania, Stafford, Westmoreland) and 1 city (Fredericksburg). The Virginia Workforce Centers: 4 certified comprehensive One-Stop Centers in Fredericksburg, Onley, Saluda, and Warsaw; 1 limited service affiliate site in Lancaster.

Unemployment rate (September 2006): 2.7%
Adult and Dislocated Worker WIA Funding (PY 2005): $760,536; Adult – $438,579; Dislocated Worker – $321,957
Adult and Dislocated Worker WIA Enrollments (PY 2005): 407: Adult – 275; Dislocated Worker – 132
counties and one city (see table above). With such a diverse and sprawling area, the workforce system is further subdivided into four Planning Districts in order to plan for and implement WIA services that meet the different workforce and business needs of the local economies. One full-service One-Stop Center is located in each of the four Planning Districts.

The unemployment rate has remained relatively low for the workforce region overall, though the economic conditions and workforce characteristics within the area vary significantly. The Northern Neck region, including Warsaw, is mainly rural and is driven by farming and agriculture and fisheries (shellfish, clams and oyster processing). Fredericksburg is the most urban area in LWIA XIII. The top three industries for the area are retail trade, education, and health care and social assistance. The Universities and hospitals are major employers.

The area is simultaneously experiencing several economic and demographic trends that are changing the area’s workforce needs and challenging the workforce system’s ability to respond. There has been a significant increase in services and retail trade and a greater demand for training and skills in these sectors alongside a decline of agriculture, forestry, fisheries, textile and some manufacturing. The area has been especially affected by the closing of large fabric and apparel plants, including a H. Warshow and Sons Inc. factory and a Levis plant that dislocated thousands of workers. At the same time, the Bay Consortium local workforce investment area is experiencing one of the largest population growths in Virginia. The population is projected to increase by 88,000 between 2000 and 2010. Much of this growth is dominated by an increase in its age 55 and over population. One key challenge has been keeping up with shifting workforce needs, including employers’ need for different skill sets and low-skilled and low-educated workers’ need for education and training, re-training, or skills upgrading in the new growth sectors.

**WIB Staffing and Operations.** The Bay Consortium WIB is comprised of 27 members representing all jurisdictions in the local workforce area. The WIB office is located in Warsaw, near the One-Stop Center visited for this study. It is staffed full-time by an Executive Director, a Fiscal Director, and a Programs and Procurement Coordinator. The staff also provide ongoing technical assistance to support and enhance operations at the four One-Stop Centers. For example, they provide support with entering data into the statewide MIS system (Virginia Workforce Network) and determining customer eligibility. Financial audits of contractor operations as well as WIB-level operations are contracted out to a private firm, Education Training Corporation.

Three of the four full-service One-Stop Centers — the Fredericksburg, Eastern Shore and Warsaw One-Stop Centers — are designated certified comprehensive centers operated by the VEC. The One-Stop Center in Saluda is also a designated certified comprehensive center and is operated by Job Assistance Center, a private for-profit training group. Each One-Stop Center is responsible for providing services to a designated set of counties within LWIA XIII. WIA Youth Program services are contracted out to three vendors that together encompass the entire area.

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1 The Consortium, created under the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), was established to coordinate federal, state and local workforce development programs and initiatives among the localities. The Consortium attained 501(c)(3) status and became the fiscal agent for JTPA, a role it has maintained under WIA.
Determining the appropriate formula for funding allocation between the Planning District areas has been a challenge for the WIB for several years and is still under consideration. In the past few years, more funding has shifted towards the planning district served by the Fredericksburg One-Stop Center since that area has experienced rising unemployment rates and increased population. At present, the formula allocates half of district funding according to the DOL formula and the other half according to prior year levels.

**WIB Funding.** The Bay Consortium has a budget of over $1.4 million (planning estimate) for Program Year (PY) 2006. All but three percent of this amount comes directly from WIA formula funds. The PY 2006 budget includes approximately $115,000 of money carried over from the previous year in anticipation of future WIA funding cuts. From PY 2005 to 2006, WIA funds allocated to the Bay WIB were reduced by 12 percent in the Adult Program, and 10 percent in the Dislocated Worker program. Youth Program funding remained constant. Other sources of income include some carryover from a small Base Realignment and Closing (BRAC) grant and carryover from a Statewide Rapid Response fund to help dislocated workers due to the closing of H. Warshow and Sons Inc., a large apparel factory.

**WIB Partnering.** The WIB has fostered strong linkages with the VEC and with some community colleges located in the various jurisdictions within the local workforce service area. The partnership with the VEC allows each entity to leverage each other’s resources to expand and enhance their respective required services. VEC staff provide a full range of core services for customers in the three certified comprehensive One-Stop Centers operated by the VEC. When appropriate, One-Stop Center core service customers are referred by VEC staff to a WIA staff person (also located at the VEC One-Stop Centers) for WIA intensive and training services. The vast majority of the partnering for actual delivery of WIA services is conducted by the local One-Stop Centers. While partnering agencies make available a range of services to meet varied needs of WIA and One-Stop customers, the WIB does not currently receive funding from any of these partners. The WIB includes an economic development representative on the Board. Members of the WIB Labor Market committee attend meetings of the Chesapeake Bay Regional Partnership, an economic development group, to learn about high demand occupations and ideas on how to better serve private businesses.

**III. Warsaw One-Stop Center Operations**

**Background.** The VEC center in Warsaw is contracted by the WIB to provide WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker services for the four Northern Neck counties, including Richmond, Westmoreland, Lancaster, and Northumberland. These are relatively small counties, with populations ranging from about 8,000 to 16,700, and a total of approximately 49,200. The Warsaw One-Stop Center, located in Richmond County, is a full-service certified One-Stop Center that has offered WIA services since 2001. The Warsaw Center is spacious and centrally located in the business district in Warsaw, with a prominent “Virginia Workforce Network” sign.
displayed outside. The VEC rents office space within the One-Stop Center to dedicated WIA staff and charges for use of some administrative resources.

**One-Stop Center Funding.** Most services available at the Warsaw One-Stop Center are funded through VEC programs other than WIA. WIA formula funds comprise only about 25 percent ($205,000) of the total One-Stop Center budget. The WIA contract leverages core-level customer services contributed by the VEC, including equipment and staff to guide customers through self-directed services. WIA funds are divided between the Adult ($130,000), and Dislocated Worker ($75,000) programs. The Warsaw One-Stop Center budget also includes a small grant ($10,000) for the Dislocated Worker Rapid Response state program. WIA funds pay for the salaries of staff that deliver WIA intensive and training services, rent, use of equipment and materials, supportive services to registered customers, and other minor costs. The WIB is the only partner to provide funding to VEC to offset the costs of operating the Warsaw One-Stop Center. The costs are based on an allocation formula that takes into account proportional space utilized by WIA staff in the One-Stop. The Warsaw One-Stop Center does not provide fee-for-service activities to augment funding for One-Stop operations. The LWIB and One-Stop Center Directors observed that other partnering agencies also face funding constraints and therefore do not have the funds available to contribute to paying the costs of One-Stop operations.

One-Stop management staff, as well as staff that provide direct services, expressed that they felt very challenged by the decline in funds available to provide WIA services for their Planning District in recent years. The money for the contract designated to their District has and is anticipated to continue to decline, particularly the portion that is specifically allocated for education and training. For PY 2006, the contract amount for WIA services through the Warsaw One-Stop Center represents less than 20 percent of total WIA funds for the total LWIA, even though this One-Stop Center enrolls more customers in WIA than any of the other Planning District areas.

One-Stop Center direct service staff noted that despite the low unemployment rate in their service area, the local economy is stagnant and the clients that seek services at the One-Stop Center have very low education or lack the skills necessary to qualify for available jobs. Many customers are also laid off from workplaces at which they have been employed for very long periods of time and need substantial skills upgrading and often re-training to become employable in another job that either maintains or increases their salary level. Many worked at plants for decades and now need to prepare for an entirely new career path. Staff maintained that an education certificate or work training program funded through the WIA is often the most efficient path to re-employment and the only way the One-Stop Center can meet its WIA performance standards.

**One-Stop Center Staffing.** The Warsaw One-Stop Center houses about 13 staff in total, all of whom are VEC employees. WIA funds are used to support 2.5 FTE positions: a Case Management Coordinator, a Case Manager, and about half the salary of the VEC Director (for management of WIA programs). The WIA Coordinator plays several roles, including providing intensive and training services for adult and dislocated workers, supervising WIA customer intake, tracking progress of WIA participants on the federal performance measures, conducting outreach to area employers, and advertising services. The Case Manager also provides intensive
and training services and case management, including conducting intake interviews and assessing client needs, and providing one-on-one counseling and job search assistance. Both the Case Management Coordinator and the Case Manager also conduct their own business outreach to find additional job openings and identify new and existing businesses where they may refer clients seeking employment. Both staff report that their workload is manageable. The VEC One-Stop Director oversees all WIA activities, monitors the budget for WIA programs, and acts as liaison to the WIB. The VEC Director also handles WIA business outreach and marketing of WIA services and, more generally, the whole range of employment services available at the One-Stop Center. The VEC pays for three “Workforce Service Representatives” that staff the One-Stop’s Resource Area where customers can access core services. Other VEC staff include clerical support staff, a Deputy for the Unemployment Insurance program, and a part-time Tax Representative for businesses.

The WIA direct service staff are fully integrated within the One-Stop Center. As VEC employees, they have access to the internal VEC ALEX jobs database. This is a key resource since staff can view details of job listings and contact information for each position that are not otherwise accessible to the general public. WIA staff also participate in regular VEC Center staff meetings. The rest of the VEC One-Stop Center staff are well aware of services available through WIA, make frequent and appropriate referrals, and occasionally collaborate in packaging necessary supportive services to WIA enrolled clients.

**Engaging and Serving Job Seekers at the One-Stop Center.** Customers that visit the Warsaw – Northern Neck One-Stop Center are offered a combination of services that encompass all of the VEC services in addition to WIA core and intensive and training services. The main services available on-site at the One-Stop Center are labor exchange services (both self-help and staff-assisted), help with obtaining Unemployment Insurance (UI), WIA intensive and training services, and GED and ESL classes. One-Stop Center management identified creating an environment of teamwork as one of their biggest challenges as well as one of their biggest successes. The priority placed on teamwork is reflected in the process flow for customers described below.

A “best practice” identified by staff is an internal electronic database that tracks customer use of services across the different programs and partners. All new customers fill out a job registration form and are immediately registered into this electronic customer database. For all customers (both new and repeat visitors), the Workforce Service Representatives enter the reason for the visit and what services the customer seeks and may need by checking from a list. The database also records subsequent information on actual use of services and referrals to partners. Information entered into the tracking database is available on all One-Stop Center staff computers in real time for customers and can be easily searched for customers who are repeat visitors. This system enables staff to efficiently track progress against customers’ goals and helps ensure that customers do not get lost between services. Staff reported that it also facilitates a more effective referral process since they can easily review the types of services a customer has already used or determine additional services that may be needed to help customers achieve their goals.
Several of the key services available at the One-Stop are briefly highlighted below:

- **Intake and Core Services.** Customers are greeted by a front desk position staffed by the Workforce Service Representatives; the physical layout is inviting. A receptionist briefly introduces the customer to the services offered on-site including VEC and WIA services, and inquires about the customer’s needs. Although anyone can walk in and use services available through the Resource Area at the One-Stop Center, virtually all customers are first registered for the Employment Service prior to using the core services available in the Resource Area. The Workforce Service Representative quickly tries to determine the specific needs of each customer and guides the individual to using services within the Resource Area or to specific staff who can perform one-on-one assessment, counseling, and referral to education, training, employment, and/or supportive services.

The Resource Area is equipped with a variety of information and equipment necessary to conduct a thorough and successful job search. Highlights include five computers with internet accessibility, access to the ALEX job search site, online Unemployment Insurance claims filing, and word processing capabilities; resource manuals regarding all aspects of job searching, including resume writing and interviewing skills; job search videos; fax machines and telephones; printers; a TDD machine; a copier; resume development software; resume paper; current literature on career information and partner and community resources; telephone and business directories; and other supplies for use in a job search. As noted above, customer information is entered into an internal mainframe database for both new and repeat visitors. WIA staff indicated that VEC staff are well versed in services available through WIA, informally assess potential customer eligibility for such services, and make frequent referrals for WIA intensive services and training.

- **Intensive Services and Training.** Referrals for WIA training or intensive services are made by the Workforce Service Representatives that staff the Resource Area or following receipt of other VEC services provided by a VEC employee. A total of 75 adults and dislocated workers received ITAs (totaling about $70,000) in PY 2005. An ITA limit is set at $3,000 for each WIA participant. For PY 2005, all WIA Adult Program funding and most Dislocated Worker program funding was obligated by February 2006. Staff anticipate that the funding reduction for the current program year (total funding for ITAs will be limited to $50,000 for PY 2006-2007) will mean that training funds are fully obligated by November 2006. In future years, the WIA Coordinator hopes to proportionally allocate ITA funding dollars throughout the year so that funding is available during quarters in which more clients typically visit the One-Stop Center or for other unexpected developments. Most training supported under the WIA program is short-term (usually several months). The vast majority (80 percent) of education and training is provided by the local community college, which also occasionally develops classes specifically for groups of WIA customers. Other education and training is provided by vocational-technical schools, and by employers at the work site. In addition to WIA, the One-Stop Center partners with Adult Education to offer GED preparation classes on-site weekly and ESL classes on-site each month. The WIB has recommended
more than a half dozen high-demand occupational areas for customers but does not enforce a focus on these areas for intensive or training services.

**Engaging and Serving Employers at the One-Stop Center.** Although there are no special initiatives or funding available to use for establishing partnerships with the employer community, the One-Stop Center provides a standard array of customized services for employers interested in listing jobs with the Job Service – for example, taking job orders from employers in-person, via the telephone, or online and matching job seekers to job openings. One-Stop Center staff work with employers to identify potential applicants and employ screening techniques to ensure that candidates match employer expectations. WIA and VEC staff have also worked closely with employers as part of Rapid Response activities using the state’s Rapid Response funds.

Beyond these kinds of employer-related activities, the One-Stop Center staff outlined several goals with respect to engaging and serving the employer community. They hope to broaden awareness of One-Stop Center services to the employer community, provide additional assistance and resources to meet employers’ needs, and improve the flow of job orders and job matching by staff. The Warsaw One-Stop Center encourages their staff to establish relationships with employers and increase in-person employer visits. However, this labor-intensive strategy presents a formidable challenge because the vast majority (around 80 percent) of area employers are small businesses. The One-Stop Center has attempted to address this challenge by hosting Employer Showcases, or in-house job fairs, for a particular employer. Overall, however, One-Stop staff indicated that there has been little activity beyond the use of Employer Showcases to increase employer engagement and services. Because the limited funds are dedicated mainly to direct program services, finding an effective means to support building connections with employers at the local level still remains a largely unrealized goal.

One-Stop Center staff expressed that, going forward, they would like and expect to see a stronger effort by the WIB to create more visibility for the One-Stop Center among the employer community. The WIB established a Labor Market committee to assess labor market needs and plan expanded and enhanced services for local businesses. The committee reflects a recent commitment to develop employers as a customer base. To jumpstart outreach to businesses and better understand their service needs, the committee developed an Employer Survey in 2005 and mailed it to about 9,000 area employers. Although the response rate was very low (and thus of limited use), survey results conveyed to WIB staff the need for training programs focused on the trade industry. By and large, some efforts to better serve employers are underway, but it appears that the staff and customers at the One-Stop Center have yet to benefit much from this effort.

**One-Stop Center Partnering.** WIA staff work closely with the community college to develop classes for Adult and Dislocated workers. For example, the community college offers free computer training once a week to improve the basic computer skills of workers laid off by the H. Warshow plant, short-term courses for LPN and RN training, and truck driving or marine engine repair. The community college also developed a dental training program for Hispanic women with limited English skills that includes literacy components. One-Stop Center and partner staff also occasionally use meeting space at the community college free of charge. The One-Stop
Center’s partnership with the Department of Social Services mainly involves coordination of client services and regular referrals.

Co-location of staff at the One-Stop Center is viewed as an important way to build partnerships and expand access to services by staff. While there is only one example of full-time co-location at the Warsaw One-Stop Center, some partial co-location of partners exists. For example, a staff member from the Department of Rehabilitative Services is available for appointments at the One-Stop Center one day per month. This partnership was initially facilitated through a Department of Labor grant that allowed the Warsaw One-Stop Center to purchase equipment to increase accessibility for customers with disabilities. The partnership with the community college and Adult Education enables the Warsaw One-Stop Center to offer English as a Second Language (ESL) and Adult Literacy workshops on-site and provide customers an opportunity to meet with an Adult Education staff person once per month. There was no mention of collaboration at the local level with economic development agencies or representatives.

In terms of maintaining coordination with partnering organizations, the Warsaw One-Stop Center holds a quarterly Network Facilitation Team meeting. The partners meetings are attended by representatives of about 15 groups, including representatives from VEC, WIA, the local schools, the community colleges and several other training providers, and the Department of Rehabilitative Services. These quarterly meetings serve as forums for sharing information about each organization’s services to heighten awareness, enhance referral arrangements, and address service gaps and other problems that may arise.

IV. Challenges and Interesting/Promising Practices

The Bay Area WIB and Warsaw One-Stop Career Center face several challenges to providing services and meeting the needs of job seekers and employers, including the following:

- **Availability of Funding to Provide Education and Training to Clients.** The chief problem faced by the One-Stop Center is lack of sufficient funding for ITAs. WIA funding continues to shrink, both in actual and inflation-adjusted terms. The shift in industry demands in the area has created a strong need for re-training and upgrading of skills, yet the amount of funding that can be devoted to ITAs has decreased over the past few years. Over the past several years, the One-Stop Center has run out of its WIA funding for ITAs for the Adult Program early in the year, and this trend is expected to continue into the current program year.

- **Difficulties Getting Other Partners to Contribute Funding to Support One-Stop Operations.** The One-Stop Center has experienced difficulties in getting other partnering organizations to commit to co-location and has had no success in obtaining funding from other organizations to offset the One Stop Center’s operating costs. All costs of operating the One-Stop are borne by VEC and WIA. One-Stop Center administrators indicated that additional state funding from other departments is needed to support One-Stop operations locally since local agencies are so strapped for funding.
• **Marketing to Job Seekers and Employers.** Lack of funding has severely limited the One-Stop Center’s ability to achieve their outreach and marketing goals. The WIB has set aside a portion of WIA funds for the development of a comprehensive marketing campaign. Warsaw One-Stop Center staff are particularly interested in seeing the Board and WIB staff become more active advocates of One-Stop Center services as part of this marketing campaign.

• **Difficulty Using the VWN System/Lack of Timely and Reliable Performance Data.** Staff reported that an area of continuous difficulty is the poor quality, timeliness, and usefulness of the state’s Virginia Workforce Network (VWN) performance management system. They explained that they would like to be able to use the database to assess their progress towards meeting performance standards throughout the year. More specifically, One-Stop Center staff would like to be able to view case records and query specific information. The Network is both frustrating to enter information into and generally unhelpful for accessing internal reports on the inputted data.

• **Determining an Appropriate Funding Formula Between Service Providers.** The WIB is considering several options for determining the funding allocation between the planning districts. The sub-areas have some disagreement over the determination of funding in light of the economic circumstances, their unique demographic characteristics, and the costs associated with operating the One-Stop Centers.

The Bay Area WIB and Warsaw One-Stop Career Center feature several interesting and promising practices:

• **ESL and GED Preparation Class Offered at One-Stop Center.** VEC has been successful in partnering with the local school board to bring a GED instructor to the One-Stop Center to provide weekly GED and ESL classes each month. This has expanded services available at the One-Stop for existing customers and also brought some new customers to the One-Stop who likely would not have otherwise been served.

• **Processes to Support Cooperation and Communication.** Processes that foster cooperative working arrangements and communication among staff further enhance positive interpersonal relationships among leadership at the WIB, One-Stop, and WIA program level. One-Stop Center management and staff identified the quality of the staff members at the One-Stop Center and their personal dedication to improving the lives of customers as integral to their success. These factors contribute to a high level of cooperation across and within programs and an ability to solve problems quickly.

• **Integration of Staff and Services.** WIA and other VEC services and programs are well-integrated electronically and through staff referrals. All new customers fill out a job registration form and are immediately registered into an electronic customer database. For all customers (both new and repeat visitors), the Workforce Service Representatives enter the reason for the visit and what services the customer seeks and may need into the database. The database also records subsequent information on actual use of services and
referrals to partners. Information entered into the tracking database is available on all One-Stop Center staff computers in real time for customers, and can be easily searched for customers who are repeat visitors. This system enables staff to efficiently track progress against customers’ goals and helps ensure that customers do not get lost between services. Staff reported that it also facilitates a more effective referral process since they can easily review the types of services a customer has already used or determine additional services that may be needed to help customers achieve their goals. The additional services that the WIA program offers through the VEC center are a key basis for the staff’s observation that they run “a full-service center for employment, not for unemployment.” WIA staff and programs are soundly supported by staff at the management level. The Warsaw One-Stop Center staff also described a positive working relationship with WIB staff, and both WIB and One-Stop Center staff expressed the opinion that they share a common vision.

- **Developing Board Capacity to Better Guide and Support One-Stop Center Operations.** Motivated by the goal to better represent their local jurisdictions and industries as well as be more involved in decision-making around workforce system needs and operations, the Board developed a self-assessment in 2005 that has led to new activities that both WIB and Warsaw One-Stop Center staff agree are tangible improvements. The survey revealed that members want more in-person reports by One-Stop staff that are qualitative in nature so that they can better understand the issues that One-Stop Centers deal with and consequently improve the WIB’s planning and decision-making. The WIB Board has since requested that One Stop Centers not report on fiscal and statistical data during staff presentations to the Board, as this information is provided in written quarterly reports. Instead, the Board requested that One-Stop staff center their presentations around success stories. The Board also thought it was important to quickly educate new members about the work of the local workforce system and developed a “New Member Orientation” CD that features the work of the centers and is now given to all new members.
I. Introduction

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) authorizes funds to provide the employment and training services of various programs and organizations through a system of One-Stop Career Centers. These One-Stop Career Centers (referred to as Virginia Workforce Centers in the Commonwealth of Virginia) provide a range of employment, training, education and supportive services funded under WIA, Wagner-Peyser, and a variety of other programs. The programs and services provided through One-Stop Career Centers – and the public and private sector organizations delivering services – vary substantially across Centers and are tailored to the unique needs, environment, and characteristics of each locality. The Virginia Workforce Centers operate under the guidance of the Virginia Workforce Council and Workforce Investment Boards in sixteen Workforce Investment Areas across the Commonwealth.

This report is intended to highlight and assess local operations of the Greater Peninsula Workforce Investment Board (WIB), with a particular focus on operations of the full-service, certified One-Stop Career Center in Hampton. Report findings are based on a one-day site visit to interview administrators and staff at the Greater Peninsula WIB and the Peninsula Workforce Development Center in Hampton (hereafter referred to as the Worklink Center), supplemented by readily available documentation and data.

II. Local Workforce Investment Board (WIB) Service Area and Operations

**Background.** LWIA XIV encompasses the seven jurisdictions located in the Greater Peninsula area by the Chesapeake Bay in eastern Virginia. These include three counties (Gloucester, James City, and York) and four cities (Hampton, Newport News, Williamsburg and Poquoson). The
The area serves about half a million people, most of whom are located in two population hubs — the cities of Newport News (180,150) and Hampton (146,437). The area also has a significant number of military members and their families who are temporary or permanent members of the area’s labor force. Five military bases are located in the area — Langley Air Force Base and Fort Monroe in Hampton, Fort Eustis in Newport News and the Yorktown Naval Weapons Station and U.S. Coast Guard Training Center in York County. Fort Monroe is among the posts to be closed by 2011 as a result of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process.

The area as a whole has maintained a steady unemployment rate of around 4 percent, roughly in line with the state’s average. The Peninsula area’s economic strengths have traditionally been in manufacturing and retail trade. Tourism also generates jobs in accommodation and the food services industry. Due to the number of military bases, the federal government is the largest employer in the area. In Hampton alone, Fort Monroe is the city’s second-largest employer. The federal government’s Post Information Office estimates that the base pumped about $1 billion into the regional economy between 2002 and 2004.

The area is simultaneously experiencing several economic and demographic trends that are changing the area’s workforce needs and challenging the workforce system’s ability to respond to those needs. In recent years, the area has experienced the largest employment growth in services (including technology, health care and education), retail trade and transportation, and manufacturing and utilities, alongside a decline in federal government. The impending closure of the military plant and concomitant loss of military jobs and businesses in related industries has put significant pressure on the workforce system’s ability to relocate military personnel and their spouses who are staying in the area. At the same time, the area has also experienced fast-paced population growth and a major increase in its age 55 and over population, though this is concentrated in two of the smaller counties (James City and York). These demographic changes have contributed to job growth in health care but, by implication, also draw on the region’s economic resources.

The Peninsula area has two comprehensive One-Stop Centers in Hampton (certified) and Williamsburg, two satellite centers (one limited service location in Newport News and one youth services center in Gloucester), and four information centers (in Fort Eustis, Langley AFB, Fort Monroe, and the U.S. Coast Guard Training). The main One-Stop Centers (in Hampton, Williamsburg and Newport News) are located in the three major markets of the region.

**WIB Staffing and Operations.** The WIB, one of the lead partners in the Peninsula-wide workforce development system, focuses on coordinating the planning and activities across the participating jurisdictions. Most of the participating entities (including representatives from the private business community, seven local elected officials, and Thomas Nelson Community College) have collaborated together for many years. The WIB is highly integrated at all levels with the strategic planning of the Peninsula Council for Workforce Development (PCFWD) with whom they share an interlocking Joint Executive Committee (established in Spring 2006), including a Chair and Vice-Chair. All private sector members of the Joint Executive Committee are members of both the WIB and the PCFWD, and several other members of WIB are also members of PCFWD. This high level of integration facilitates the coordination of activities
across the respective jurisdictions so that WIA funded programs dovetail as much as possible with local planning and “move in one direction.”

The WIB is supported by several Consortium Staff, including five workforce development professionals and one administrative support personnel. Subsequent to the site visit, it was further clarified that the Consortium also contracts with the PCFWD to provide non-WIA staff support for the WIB (three professionals and three administrative support personnel). In addition to providing support to the WIB, Consortium staff provide ongoing technical assistance to support and enhance operations at the four One-Stop Centers (e.g., in entering data into the statewide Virginia Workforce Network). The focus of the WIB has been strategic planning, improving multi-system coordination, and leveraging additional funds for the workforce system. WIB staff reported that oversight and monitoring activities and performance of the one-stop centers has greatly increased in the past few years.

**WIB Funding.** The Greater Peninsula LWIA has been very successful at raising additional funds through grants and financial contributions from partners as a means to increase the capacity of the workforce system to serve more customers and focus on the specific needs of the local economy and employers. For PY 2006, the WIB has a total operating budget of approximately $4.4 million, including $1.2 million in carry-over funds from 2005. WIA funds make up about $2.8 million (64 percent) of the total budget and this base amount is topped up almost 40 percent through three additional grants:

- The NEXStep Training for Transition grant, funded by U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), is designed to help dislocated military spouses relocating to the Hampton Roads region transition. This 5-year grant, which expires in 2007, was awarded to Opportunity Inc. in LWIA XVI. Opportunity Inc. established contracts with the Greater Peninsula Workforce Development Consortium and the Crater Regional Workforce Investment Board to carry out the program. Each workforce area receives approximately $1,500,000 per year. The NEXStep grant enabled the WIB to increase Case Management staff across the region, support four satellite centers (Langley Air Force Base and Ft. Monroe in Hampton, Fort Eustis in Newport News, and the U.S. Coast Guard Training Center in York County), and is a major source of funding for the Worklink Center located in Hampton.

- A two-year Base Realignment and Closing (BRAC) planning grant of $185,000 was received in 2005 to help workers affected by the closing of Fort Monroe and troops realignments occurring at other local military installations.

- A three-year High Growth Job Training Initiative grant, funded by DOL, in the amount of $1,965,000 was awarded in 2005 to address the need for skilled workers within the Advanced Manufacturing Sector.

The major funding challenge for the WIB is to navigate the phase-out of the NEXStep military grant while maintaining as much of the current system capacity and quality of services as possible. The Board is concerned that as the grant phases out, they may need to reduce service
locations as well as the number of staff at the operational sites. Offices that now operate full-time may also be maintained at part-time capacity.

**WIB Partnering.** All the One-Stop Centers are operated by a One-Stop Operator Team comprised of three mandated partners: Thomas Nelson Community College (TNCC), the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC), and New Horizons Regional Education Center. TNCC is designated as the lead One-Stop Operator, with responsibility for the operation of all One-Stop Centers in this local workforce investment area. The VEC and New Horizons Regional Education Center work with TNCC to provide management oversight and advice and guidance on program coordination. Given this arrangement, the WIB’s strongest partnerships are with TNCC, the VEC, and New Horizons Regional Education Center. As the lead One-Stop Operator for the area, TNCC shares some of its staff and resources to enhance and expand One-Stop operations. WIA Youth Services are contracted to New Horizons Regional Education Center. The VEC office at the Peninsula Worklink Center in Hampton defrays part of the cost of the One-Stop’s Resource Area. In addition, a Business Liaison position that is based at the Williamsburg One-Stop Center is equally financed by WIA funds and the Williamsburg Department of Social Services. The majority of contributions by partners at the local level are in-kind. The WIB has strong partnerships with the economic development community, community colleges, adult education and vocational-technical proprietary schools.

**III. Hampton One-Stop Center Operations**

*Background.* The Peninsula Worklink Center in Hampton is operated by TNCC, which holds the contract for the provision of WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker services, as well as some older youth services. The facility, which opened in 2001, is the result of a strong partnership between the Hampton local government, the Consortium and WIB, and TNCC. In the late 1990s, these entities joined together to plan a new facility that would house and integrate career, education and employment-focused services. The Consortium, anticipating the changes in the federal workforce system brought by the passage of the WIA, agreed to be the leaseholder of the new facility.

Jointly financed by the local governments, at a cost of $9 million, the Peninsula Workforce Development Center is a new and large two-story facility that houses four core occupants in a single space: the Peninsula Worklink One-Stop Center, a local VEC office, TNCC, and Old Dominion University graduate programs. All four core occupants pay to lease space in the building. The physical layout of the facility is divided into separate spaces for the different organizations. Customers enter the building at the ground level and follow the signs to either the VEC center or the Peninsula Worklink center on the opposite side of the hall on the first floor. The Worklink Center has a well developed, spacious, inviting and easy-to-navigate Resource Area at the main entrance. The Center sits next to the main TNCC campus as well as the New Horizons Education Center. The occupants operate in a collaborative spirit but retain separate organizational identities and missions.

*One-Stop Center Funding.* The Worklink Center is funded at a level of $2.6 million per year. WIA program funds account for roughly half of this total. WIA funds are divided between the
Adult ($486,630), Dislocated Worker ($590,457) and Youth ($200,000) programs. The NEXStep military grant is also integrated into One-Stop services – it accounts for 38 percent of Worklink Center operations and pays for almost half of the lease. The BRAC grant accounts for eight percent of the Worklink Center’s budget. Staff at both the WIB and Worklink Center estimate that the partnership with TNCC greatly expands the capacity of the Center. There are no additional partners located on-site to help defray the cost of the lease.

Current and past year reductions in WIA funding and the impending grant phase-outs pose the greatest challenges to One-Stop Center operations. Past funding cuts have forced staff reductions at the Worklink Center and some restructuring of services. WIA-funded staff have been reduced from 26.75 in 2005 to 17.84 for PY 2006, equaling a full-time equivalent of almost nine staff. These positions have either been eliminated altogether, switched to shared funding streams with TNCC, or entirely funded by TNCC in order to help maintain center capacity. It is anticipated that current program year reductions in WIA funding in combination with the phase-out of the military grants will lead to significant reductions in funding for the Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs for PY 2006 - 2007. At the time of the site visit, the expected scale-backs included a 48 percent reduction for the Dislocated Worker program, 32 percent for the Adult Program, and a 38 percent reduction in funds for Individual Training Accounts (ITAs). Worklink Center management and front-line staff felt very challenged by the decline in funds available to provide WIA services for their area.

In the face of these significant funding reductions, a decrease in the number of staff that deliver WIA services appears likely. The Worklink Center also anticipated scaling back the number of ITAs approved and leveraging funds from services now offered at no cost. For example, the Worklink Center intends to introduce a fee for some services. Employers and organizations may be asked to pay for employee or prospective employee testing and certification offered at the center, including new services the center would provide or services that TNCC currently offers on-site at no cost.

**One-Stop Center Staffing.** The Worklink Center maintains a substantial number of staff (20) for one-stop operations. All Worklink staff are TNCC employees, and nearly all are fully or partially supported by WIA funds. Some of the staff share their time between One-Stop responsibilities and work for TNCC. The Center Executive Director is a TNCC employee dedicated on a part-time basis to managing the center. TNCC pays for an Administrative Assistant for the Worklink Center. One WIA Program Coordinator supervises five on-site full-time case managers, or Career Development Specialists, and one case manager at the Williamsburg One-Stop Center. The Career Development Specialists (CDS) provide WIA intensive and training services and case management, including conducting intake interviews and assessing client needs, providing one-on-one counseling and job search assistance. The Specialists also do their own search for job openings and new and existing businesses where they may refer clients for work. A second on-site WIA Program Coordinator oversees four Supervisors at other one-stop centers in the Peninsula workforce region, a Job Developer/Business Liaison position shared with (and housed at) the Williamsburg Department of Social Services (DSS), and 2.5 Career Information Specialists who provide core services in the Worklink Center’s Resource Area. TNCC provides staff to supplement the assistance offered by Career Information Specialist positions in the Resource Area.
Engaging and Serving Job Seekers at the One-Stop Center. The Peninsula Workforce Development Center was created to “showcase” and market the services of the workforce development system and Worklink to area residents and businesses and it is the focal point for workforce development activities for the region. The Worklink Center records indicate a total of 20,668 core-level services between July 2005 and June 2006. (Note: The Center records “transactions” but does not record individual customers served.) In contrast, the only other certified comprehensive center in the region provided approximately 2,200 core-level services during the same period. The main services available on-site are labor exchange services (both self-help and staff-assisted), an extensive Resource Area for self-directed job search and career exploration, skills and certificate testing services, and a range of workshops.

Staff reported that a portion of its job seeker customer base is made up of older students enrolled in TNCC and individuals seeking services from the VEC. While it is recognized that the Worklink Center experiences a high volume of visits and serves more students and VEC clients than it might if located elsewhere, staff also cited the location of the facility as a key disadvantage to being able to serve some low-income populations that are most likely to need One-Stop Center services. The location is not central or easily accessible to low-income and economically disadvantaged individuals. In order to improve access to services among the hard-to-serve population, the WIB is considering setting up a mobile One-Stop service to reach out to this population.

Several key features about Worklink Center operations in Hampton are briefly highlighted below:

- **Intake and Core Services.** Customers who enter the Worklink Center are greeted by a modern, expansive physical layout. Career Information Specialists at the main desk greet and ask customers to fill out a sign-in sheet, collect background information on the customer and services sought, and provide customers assistance with using the self-directed services in the Resource Area. Career Information Specialists interviewed for this study appeared very knowledgeable about the electronic and library offerings available at the core level.

  The Resource Area is equipped with a variety of information and equipment necessary to conduct a job search. Highlights include several computers with internet accessibility and word processing capabilities; resource manuals regarding all aspects of job searching including resume writing and interviewing skills; job search videos; faxing and phoning capabilities; printers; TDD machine; copier; resume development software; resume paper; current literature on career information and partner and community resources, telephone and business directories; three meeting or interview rooms, and other supplies for use in a job search.

  In addition to self-directed job search assistance available through the Resource Area, job search assistance is offered through scheduled workshops offered by core-level staff. The workshops are offered on a frequent, often weekly, basis and focus on a variety of topics such as: “Interviewing Skills: How to be your Best before, During and After the
Interview,” “Effective Job Search Techniques and Tools,” “Match Your Skills and Interests With a Job and Career – The Internet Way,” and “Matching Your Interests with Just the Right Job for You.” Customers learn about these workshop offerings from a calendar posted in the Resource Area and/or from the staff. Between June 2005 - July of 2006, approximately 200 workshops were held at the Worklink Center and attended by over 1,000 customers. Some of the workshops are offered through combined funding from TNCC and WIA. Finally, customers can watch a video on the computers in the Resource Area on the range of manufacturing-related jobs and careers available at Northrup Grumman, a locally based large defense contractor.

Core service customers are also strongly encouraged to attend an orientation session led by a Career Development Specialist for a comprehensive overview of the full array of Worklink services. Staff said the twice-weekly, two-hour orientations are usually attended by customers who have already explored core services on their own and are seeking additional guidance or information that would enhance the success of their job search. The orientations are also the main assessment point for referrals to intensive services. A Career Development Specialist collects client information during the second hour of the orientation and makes an initial determination regarding whether a referral to intensive services is appropriate. Intensive and training services, described more fully below, are offered by the on-site Career Development Specialists.

Pressures from budget concerns outlined above have prompted the Worklink Center to move towards more direct and personalized services offered in groups prior to or upon WIA program enrollment, including staff-assisted core level services focused on job placement. This strategy is intended to ease the volume of work on intensive-level staff, shift emphasis from one-on-one counseling to instruction in group settings, provide individualized services to more customers, improve client job skills and job search skills, and reduce the use of ITAs.

Within the last 18 months, staff have designed and implemented a group orientation to Worklink services and expanded the menu of workshops. For example, Career Development Specialists assisted in developing a “Workforce Interpersonal Skills Certificate” (WISC) Program, consisting of a two-day group workshop that incorporated many of the job readiness and job search skills that had previously been covered primarily on a one-on-one basis with intensive services clients. The workshop presents sessions on career planning and readiness, job search skills, preparing for work, and information on employer expectations so that clients can retain their jobs once they become employed. Upon completion of all sessions, participants receive a certificate. The workshop had a first test-run in June 2006 and it is expected at least one more session will be held this fall.

Overall, the Worklink Center hopes the move toward more up-front intensive group services will help them operate more efficiently in two ways: by reducing the amount of time Career Development Specialists work with clients one-on-one and by improving client job skills and job search skills. At this early stage of implementation, participants
in the orientation sessions are mostly customers using core services. Workshops are offered to both core and intensive-level clients.

- **Intensive Services and Training.** The Peninsula Worklink Center in Hampton offers a range of employment and training services. The partnership with TNCC has encouraged a stronger and broader focus on career development, to the extent possible, in addition to the existing focus on job placement. Staff emphasized their commitment to help clients access job skills and career services that are more likely to develop careers in a specific field. About 30 percent of clients who receive ITAs attend education or training offered by TNCC; many enter courses that offer some work-related certification.

In fact, the staff said they like to refer clients to take the Career Readiness Certificate as much as possible and are encouraged by the College’s leadership in adopting and promoting the use of the Career Readiness Certificate system. Staff reported that they emphasize a career development approach when working with clients, especially those that are considered hard to serve or with very varied work histories. The Career Development Specialists say this emphasis translates into more in-depth researching and assessment of likely career paths in conjunction with different kinds of jobs, an emphasis on education, and encouraging clients to do certification and training courses that are career-focused. It also likely fuels the shared consensus about a responsibility to “empower and give self-confidence” to clients to rebuild their work lives, a phrase that was often mentioned during the site visit interviews with staff.

TNCC offers a testing and certification service at the Worklink center. Testing is offered at no cost to customers who are enrolled in WIA programs and/or One-Stop customers whose tests are sponsored by local employers. Some customers make use of the various testing resources to improve their job seeking prospects; local employers also sponsor tests for prospective employees as a screening tool or for job advancement. Testing resources are also available for clients who are disabled or visually impaired.

The Worklink Center has placed increasingly greater emphasis on targeting vouchers to the neediest clients. Staff estimate that about 75 percent of ITAs issued in the last program year were for hard-to-serve clients, including ex-offenders. WIA ITA vouchers are capped at $4,000 per client. Few on-the-job and customized training positions are available; about 20 clients were enrolled in these activities over the last year.

**Engaging and Serving Employers at the One-Stop Center.** Staff reported that efforts to expand specialized services for employers, market those services to businesses and improve overall employer relationships increased over the past year at both the WIB and One-Stop level. A major challenge in promoting these services is that employers are still skeptical about working with any government-funded program, and there remains a pervasive perception that individuals who seek Worklink services would not make desirable employees. At the same time, staff at every level reported an improvement in business outreach and relationships.

The Worklink Center has been able to fund two new positions to promote services to employers. One position, a Community Relations Coordinator, is paid for through NEXStep grant funds;
another full-time position is funded equally by the City of Williamsburg and the Worklink Center to conduct marketing and outreach for Worklink and job development for the local VIEW program, the state’s TANF welfare-to-work program. Both staff take a very proactive “on the road” approach to establishing new business contacts, meeting with business clients, and promoting Worklink services at job fairs and related events. They focus on “selling” employers on the access they can gain to skilled workers through the Worklink Center, highlighting employer services such as free testing and certification, on-site job recruitment fairs, on-the-job and customized training opportunities and the NEXStep grant program for improving employee skill-levels. Businesses that have held job fairs at the center include Verizon, Teltec (a call center) and Sentara Hospital. Northrup Grumman, a member of the WIB and PCFWD, has produced an informational CD-ROM of jobs available and their skills requirements for use within One-Stop Centers.

The Board has tried to link their activities with industry-based economic development efforts in the area. The Board selected four high-growth industries where direct service staff should focus their job placement efforts: manufacturing, hospitality and tourism, construction, and health care services. The Career Development Specialist staff follow this guidance in recommending training options to their WIA training enrollees and, to a lesser extent, in their work with individuals receiving WIA intensive services.

**One-Stop Center Partnering.** The core partners of the Worklink Center are Thomas Nelson Community College (TNCC), New Horizons, and the VEC. The extensive resource-sharing and collaboration between the partners substantially expands WIA service delivery capability. Many of the Worklink Center’s workshops for job seekers are operated fully or partially by TNCC. The College also commits staff resources to Worklink Center operations and shares additional free office space when necessary. New Horizons operates WIA programs for out-of-school youth in the building next door and subcontracts with area school divisions for in-school youth services. Staff from both locations reportedly communicate often to coordinate services for individuals that are eligible for both out-of-school Youth or Adult services. Worklink also jointly funds a business service position with DSS and occasionally refers customers to DSS. Worklink Center direct service staff also frequently refer customers to the VEC office located across from the Worklink Center and sometimes coordinate supports for shared clients.

Worklink staff report that there is substantial cross-communication and collaboration between the partnering organizations housed within the Peninsula Workforce Development Center. For example, the Directors or key management staff from TNCC, Worklink, and the VEC sit in on monthly Operations Management meetings, a practice that staff believe leads to significant information sharing and cooperative problem solving. These meetings serve as forums for sharing information about each group’s services and to heighten awareness, enhance referral arrangements, and address service gaps and other problems that may arise. In an effort to assess what services clients seek and how to better work together, the Worklink Center collects and compiles the number of visits and limited service data from both the VEC and Worklink centers into one report. Finally, the NEXStep grant is reported to have facilitated very good relationships with four military posts in the area. Worklink satellite centers have full- or part-time staff located on all four military posts and have enrolled about 250 clients in the years since establishing those sites.
Beyond the close core partnerships and coordination with DSS, there appeared to be little resource-sharing or coordination between the Worklink Center and the broader array of service providers in the community. Staff at both the One-Stop and WIB-level noted that they have found it consistently difficult over the years to establish tangible resource sharing with other area groups, as they are also constrained with tight budgets.

Although the shared location of the Worklink Center, TNCC, VEC and the close proximity of New Horizons Regional Education Center are beneficial for clients seeking related work and education and training services, there also exists some duplication of services. The VEC office maintains its own resource area with some of the same services as the Worklink Center. VEC also provides job search and assistance through its own labor exchange program. Some VEC database information is not available to Worklink Center staff or their customers, although the co-location of the two organizations in the same building facilitates the ease in which Worklink Center customers can gain access to VEC-based information while also availing themselves to the resources provided by the Worklink Center. TNCC also has an office for career assistance and workforce development on the premises that is funded by a DOL grant, but staff had different perspectives on whether there is tangible coordination and communication between the office and Worklink Center.

IV. Challenges and Interesting/Promising Practices

The WIB and Worklink Center in Hampton face several challenges to providing services and meeting the needs of job seekers and employers, including the following:

- **WIA Funding Cuts and Grant Phase-outs Threaten Current Service and Operation Capacity Availability.** The major challenge for both the WIB and the One-Stop is to navigate the cuts in WIA formula funds and phase-out of the NEXStep military grant while maintaining as much of the current system capacity and quality of services as is possible. The Board may need to reduce service locations as well as staff, and cut down capacity at the remaining sites. Decline in WIA funding in recent years has translated into staff reductions at the Worklink Center, with more anticipated for PY 2006. The center is also expecting to scale back the number of ITAs approved.

- **Difficulties Getting Other Partners to Contribute Funding to Support One-Stop Operations.** The Worklink Center has strong key partnerships with the College and New Horizons, but WIB and One-Stop staff indicated that funding from other state-level departments in the state is needed to support One-Stop operations locally because local agencies are so strapped for funding. No partner has committed to co-location within the WorkLink Center or to help offset the costs of operating the One-Stop Center.

- **Lack of Access to WorkLink Center by Low-Income Residents.** While the Worklink Center observes high traffic in its current location and the benefits of shared resources and student traffic in the building, the location of the facility is not central or easily accessible to low-income and economically disadvantaged individuals. The WIB staff are
considering setting up a mobile One-Stop service to reach out to this population, but may be constrained by current and future funding reductions.

The Peninsula WIB and WorkLink Center feature several interesting and promising practices:

- **Increased Personalized Services in Groups at Core Level to Relay Job Skills Up-Front.** In response to financial pressures and limited staff resources, the Worklink Center has moved towards more direct and personalized services offered in groups prior to or upon WIA program enrollment. The goal, supported by direct service staff, is to ease the volume of work at the level of intensive Services, reduce the use of ITAs, and relay more job skills and job search skills up-front.

- **Range of Workshops Offered at WorkLink Center in Coordination with Thomas Nelson Community College (TNCC).** The WorkLink Center is able to regularly offer a broad range and number of job search and work preparation workshops. Many of the workshops are offered through combined funding from TNCC and WIA. The Worklink Center held approximately 200 workshops attended by over 1,000 clients during PY 2005.

- **Shared Business Outreach Position with Williamsburg Department of Social Services.** A full-time Business Liaison position is funded equally by the City of Williamsburg and the Worklink Center to conduct marketing and outreach for Worklink and job development for the local VIEW program, the state’s TANF welfare-to-work program.

- **Career Focused Case Management.** Direct service staff at all levels are focused on helping clients access job skills and career services that are more likely to develop careers in a specific field. They say they highlight for clients the likely career paths and options of certain jobs and encourage clients to participate in career-focused certification and training courses. Most clients use ITAs to obtain education and training certificates, and many take the Career Readiness Certificate test. Staff reported that they emphasize a career development approach when creating an Individual Employment Plan with clients, especially those that are hard-to-serve or clients with very varied work histories.
MINI-ASSESSMENT OF ONE-STOP CAREER CENTER AND WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD (WIB) OPERATIONS – CRATER REGION (LWIA XV)

I. Introduction

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) authorizes funds to provide the employment and training services of various programs and organizations through a system of One-Stop Career Centers. These One-Stop Career Centers (referred to as Virginia Workforce Centers in the Commonwealth of Virginia) provide a range of employment, training, education and supportive services funded under WIA, Wagner-Peyser, and a variety of other programs. The programs and services provided through One-Stop Career Centers – and the public and private sector organizations delivering services – vary substantially across Centers and are intended to be tailored to the unique needs, environment, and characteristics of each locality. The Virginia Workforce Centers operate under the guidance of the Virginia Workforce Council and Workforce Investment Boards in sixteen Workforce Investment Areas across the Commonwealth.

This report is intended to highlight and assess local operations of the Crater Region Workforce Investment Board (WIB), with a particular focus on operations of the Tri-Cities Workforce Development Center located in Hopewell, Virginia. Report findings are based on a one-day site visit in September 2006 to interview administrators and staff at the Crater Region WIB and the Tri-Cities One-Stop Career Center, supplemented by readily available documentation and data.

II. Local Workforce Investment Board (WIB) Service Area and Operations

Background. The Crater Workforce Investment Board operates as the administrative and fiscal entity for LWIA XV. The WIB oversees operations across 10 local jurisdictions, which includes six counties and four cities (see table above). The Tri-Cities One-Stop Career Center located in

SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CRATER REGION WORKFORCE INVESTMENT AREA (LWIA XV)

Geographic Area Served: 9 jurisdictions served, including 6 counties (Dinwiddie, Greensville, Prince George, Surry and Sussex Counties) and 4 cities (the cities of Colonial Heights, Emporia, Hopewell, and Petersburg). Crater WIB XV also has MOU agreement with Chesterfield County to serve southern Chesterfield, which is a jurisdiction of WIB Area IX.

Virginia Workforce Centers: 2 full-service, certified Centers in Hopewell and Emporia; 2 satellite centers in Petersburg and Ft. Lee.


Unemployment rate (September 2006): 4.5%

Adult and Dislocated Worker WIA Funding (PY 2005): $469,473; Adult - $355,608; Dislocated Worker - $113,865

Adult and Dislocated Worker WIA Enrollments (PY 2005-06) – 479; Adult - 322, Dislocated Worker – 157
Hopewell is one of two full-service, certified One-Stop Centers in LWIA XV. It provides services primarily to the counties of Southern Chesterfield, Prince George, Dinwiddie, and Surrey, and the cities of Petersburg, Colonial Heights and Hopewell. The Tri-Cities area is the home of Ft. Lee and military personnel make up a significant presence in the Tri-Cities area. The military base is expected to gain about 3,250 positions over the next five years and there is currently a major construction effort occurring to accommodate the projected expansion. The other full-service, certified One-Stop Center is located in Emporia, about 50 miles from Hopewell near the border of North Carolina. The Emporia One-Stop Career Center provides services primarily to the counties of Greensville and Sussex and the City of Emporia. However, both One-Stop Career Centers will serve anyone from the entire area (as well as other areas).

There are two satellite offices — one located in Petersburg and one located at Ft. Lee. The Petersburg satellite center, which is also where the WIB administrative office is located, is supported solely through WIA funds. Customers unable to find employment through core services available at the Tri-Cities One-Stop Center may receive intensive services (if eligible) at either the Tri-Cities One-Stop Center or the satellite center in Petersburg. The Ft. Lee satellite offers a full range of core and WIA intensive employment services to veterans and their dependents as well as NEXStep employment services for eligible military spouses. WIA Youth services are contracted out on a competitive basis to four organizations – City of Petersburg POWER Youth Services, the Improvement Association POWER Youth Services, Petersburg Urban Ministries and Dinwiddie County Public Schools – and each organization is assigned to serve different geographic areas within the region.

The total civilian labor force in the Crater LWIA for September 2006 was 75,782, of which 72,345 were employed and 3,437 were unemployed. The total number of employees located in this LWIA in 2006 was 67,163. The largest major industry sector was Health Care and Social Assistance (16 percent of the employment), followed by Retail Trade (14 percent), and Manufacturing (13 percent). The unemployment rate for the entire region was 4.5 percent. The area has experienced a decline in manufacturing and some plant closures (e.g., the Perdue plant in 1994 resulted in a layoff of 600 people) but also some new employers such as StarTek, a call-in center that opened in 2006 and hired nearly 600 people from the area. At the same time that some sub-areas are experiencing a relatively strong economy and anticipating a substantial growth in economic activity, there are also many pockets of deep poverty and the area has one of the highest illiteracy rates in the nation.

**WIB Staffing and Operations.** The LWIB has a staff of four full-time and one part-time staff: an executive director, executive assistant (deputy for operations), workforce planning and program services specialist, accountant and a part-time secretary. The workforce planning specialist, responsible for facilitated business and education outreach activities, is a new position funded through a grant from the Cameron Foundation. The grant also pays for half of the salary of the full-time accountant, a position that was previously only part-time.

**WIB Funding.** In Program Year (PY) 2005, the LWIB budgeted a total of $553,903 to support One-Stop operations in the area, 84 percent of which is WIA funding for adults ($355,608) and dislocated workers ($113,865). The remaining balance of funding comes from a multi-year DOL...
grant administered in partnership with LWIB XVI. The grant supports NEXStep, a National Emergency Grant (NEG) pilot program that provides career counseling and training to military spouses. Funding for the pilot ended in June 2005, but the WIB has about $80,000 in carry-over funding to continue program activities for another year.

Already the WIA fiscal and administrative entity, the WIB sought and was approved 501(c)(3) status in 2005 in order to be able to expand its funding base. The WIB received a 3-year grant totaling $236,000 in 2005 from The Cameron Foundation to support the addition of a new Workforce Planning Specialist and enhance the WIB’s ability to function as a workforce intermediary. In 2005 and 2006, the WIB also received $125,000 in total, to plan for an expansion of the existing Ft. Lee satellite center in response to an increase in military families at Ft. Lee due to BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure). The WIB is partnering with Capitol Area and Richmond WIBs, along with others, to respond to needs of military families and civilians affected by BRAC. The WIB also holds a $150,000 contract with the Department of Social Services (DSS) to provide employment services to TANF recipients engaged in or transitioning off the VIEW program. Finally, the WIB received $17,500 in incentive funds for its strong performance in meeting its WIA performance measures.

From the perspective of the WIB, an ongoing funding challenge is how to meet the WIA objectives of sharing the costs of One-Stop operations across different partners. Beyond the WIB contracting with VEC to be the One-Stop operator, there is no cost sharing among partners with the exception of salary costs related to collocating staff by partnering agencies. Given that all partner agencies are dealing with their own budget constraints and must operate in accordance with their own funding/program requirements, the reluctance of partners to provide financial support for the infrastructure costs of maintaining and operating a One-Stop is understandable and yet still represents a frustrating disconnect between policy expectation and what is feasible in practice.

**WIB Partnering.** The WIB has particularly strong linkages with the VEC, and has also fostered linkages with economic development agencies and districts serving the entire LWIA region as well as the City of Petersburg’s economic development agency (described in greater detail below). The WIB has always contracted with the VEC to operate its certified, full-service One-Stop Centers at the VEC offices in Hopewell and Emporia and views the partnership in a very positive light. WIB staff also noted that the DSS represented another important and successful partnership, particularly on behalf of TANF VIEW participants. When training is determined an appropriate activity, DSS will utilize its TANF supported training dollars on behalf of its TANF VIEW participant and, on a case-by-case basis, WIA will pick up the difference or perhaps pay for needed supportive services. In addition to this kind of cost-sharing and leveraging, DSS has entered into a 3-year $150,000 contract with the WIB (who in turn contracts with a vendor) to operate a TANF Learn to Earn program for current and former TANF recipients that allows TANF participants to be dual-enrolled in the WIA Adult Program and receive WIA intensive services and occupational skills training assistance via Individual Training Accounts (ITAs). The contract provider, Moving Forward Agency, serves TANF recipients across the entire region. The WIB also maintains linkages through a monthly WIA Partner Network meeting that
has enabled the partners (27 in all) to keep abreast of each other’s activities and develop a more effective referral system.

III. Tri-Cities One-Stop Career Center Operations

**Background.** The Tri-Cities One-Stop Career Center located in Hopewell is one of two full-service, certified One-Stop Centers in Region XV and provides services primarily to the Counties of Southern Chesterfield, Prince George, Dinwiddie, and Surrey, and the Cities of Petersburg, Colonial Heights and Hopewell (located within 10 miles of each other). The other full-service, certified One-Stop Center is located in Emporia, very near the border of North Carolina and about 50 miles from Hopewell. VEC leases the building that houses the VEC/Tri-Cities One Stop Career Center. The Center is on a bus line, the result of a two-year concentrated effort to develop a bus line that includes the VEC Tri-Cities One-Stop Center, the two satellite centers, John Tyler Community College, and provides connections to Richmond. Because many of the outlying areas in the Crater Area are rural, lack of public transportation still remains a barrier but the bus line is viewed as a very positive development that has significantly increased access to services, especially for the hard-to-serve.

**One-Stop Center Funding.** WIA is the only One-Stop “partner” that provides funding to VEC to support the costs of operating the Tri-Cities One-Stop Center. No overall budget figure for the current program year was available because much of the costs of One-Stop operations are funded by VEC through centralized purchasing. WIA funds are covered to pay a small share of rent to the VEC, a portion of the salaries of the One-Stop Manager and the cost of the WIA counselor positions. There are no fee-for-service activities to augment funding for One-Stop operations.

**One-Stop Center Staffing.** As of October 2006, a total of 22 full-time and five part-time staff (plus two high school volunteers performing work study assignments and one volunteer placed by AARP) worked at the Hopewell One-Stop Center, a few of which are out-stationed at the satellite centers. The staff is hired under different programs administered by the VEC (e.g., Unemployment Insurance, Wagner-Peyser Employment Service, WIA Adult and Dislocated Workers, Veteran’s Administration, and Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker). There are five WIA-funded counselors responsible for all WIA related services; one of these counselors is out-stationed full-time in the Petersburg-based satellite office but can be rotated to either the Hopewell or Emporia One-Stop Centers if needed. Four staff are assigned to a Business Resource Unit that provides employer marketing and job placement services. There is also one full time WIA regional coordinator. In addition to four dedicated intake staff, the BRU staff, WIA counselors, UI claims processing staff and two individuals dedicated to carrying out REA grant activities are all cross-trained on intake. They staff the reception desk once a week on a rotating basis and assist customers with core services or refer to other services as needed. It was noted that it takes about three years to “grow” an intake person so that they are truly cross-trained.

Overall, given the increasing demand for its services, the level of staff was characterized as insufficient and created significant management challenges. Staff are stretched quite thin and are routinely dispatched to different offices within the region (and sometimes to different regions) to
Engaging and Serving Job Seekers at the One-Stop Center. The Tri-Cities One-Stop Career Center experiences a high volume of traffic, a reflection of a high level of underemployment in the area. According to staff estimates, between 600-700 customers walk in for services on a weekly basis and, on the day of the study site visit, the front desk had logged in a combined total of 205 visits and phone calls. Higher levels of customer activity may be experienced in connection with job fair events and rapid response activities. The intake tracking system is not structured in such a way as to be able to provide unduplicated counts of customers served.

For the WIB as a whole, the total numbers of WIA enrolled individuals for program year 2004-2005 were as follows: WIA Adults, 285; WIA Dislocated Workers, 120; and WIA Youth, 121. In addition, an additional 235 individuals were served through the NEXStep grant program. The Tri-Cities One Stop Center and its two satellite centers served about 62 percent of the LWIA XV adult WIA participants and the vast majority of NEXStep participants. In program year 2005-2006, there were no new NEXStep enrollees as the program had moved into a closeout phase.

A range of employment services is available to job seekers through the One-Stop Center. Several of the key services available and the basic customer flow are briefly highlighted below:

- **Intake and Core Services.** The VEC provides core services on a universal basis. Most customers of the One-Stop Center are seeking job search assistance. When job seekers first come to the One-Stop Center, they are greeted and asked to sign-in. Although anyone can walk in and use services available through the resource room at the One-Stop Center, virtually all customers are first registered for the Employment Services prior to using the core services. First-time customers are asked to fill out an Initial Information and Interest (“Triple I”) Form. The form includes questions about the customer’s interests, including participating in WIA programs — those interested must fill out additional information on the form to prescreen for possible eligibility. Computers are located in the lobby so clients can access to the Automated Labor Exchange (ALEX) job search, apply for UI benefits, and do online Job Search and registration. A designated Career Resource Room is adjacent to the front lobby. This room is equipped with a variety of information and equipment necessary to assist the individual’s job search—computers with internet accessibility and word processing capabilities; resource manuals regarding various aspects of job searching including resume writing and interviewing skills; faxing, phoning capabilities and copier. The Resource Room is primarily self-directed, although customer service staff assigned to the front-desk can assist a customer if needed and requested.
Job matching is the preferred and primary means of referrals for employment. Job seekers matching employer qualifications are contacted by telephone or mail and asked to call the office. Failure to respond to a call-in letter within 10 days automatically inactivates the registration. If the customer indicates an interest in receiving WIA services on the Triple I form and appears eligible for WIA, they are scheduled to attend a mandatory general orientation session. Those who do not appear eligible for WIA may still attend on a voluntary basis. About 15-30 people are typically scheduled per session, although there are a high number of no-shows. These “Workforce Wednesday” orientation sessions are held on a weekly basis and cover WIA services and eligibility as well as an introduction to other VEC services. If the person is still interested in pursuing WIA services at the end of the session, they will briefly meet with a WIA counselor to make sure the Triple I form is complete and are scheduled for an eligibility appointment.

- **Intensive Services and Training:** After the eligibility appointment and determination that an individual is eligible for intensive services, an appointment is made with the WIA counselor to develop the Individual Employment Plan (IEP). Intensive services typically include individual employment counseling, job development, and case management, more in-depth use of ALEX and other job search databases, a required Work Keys assessment, and mandatory participation in a three-hour Job Readiness Workshop led by a Workforce Services Representative that is held on a monthly basis. The WIA counselors are required to keep in touch with participants on a monthly basis once they have completed the IEP.

Training may be provided after the IEP has documented the receipt of core and intensive services. The focus is on identifying training opportunities that match the customer’s interests and can provide a path for career advancement. The Work Keys assessment is now being utilized in the One-Stop Career Centers in Hopewell, Petersburg and Emporia as a part of the career counseling at no cost to participants. The WIA counselors interviewed for this study felt that this was a very valuable assessment tool since many employers in the area used the Work Keys assessment system to help them make hiring decisions. Additional vocational or career assessments are provided by One-Stop case managers. The predominant type of training provided is classroom-based occupational training and the predominant training provider is John Tyler community college. There are currently five employers with OJT agreements; two of these have only 1-2 slots available and the other three have up to 10 slots available. There are currently 50 slots available for customized training participants.

An ITA limit is set at $4,000 for up to 24 consecutive months for each WIA participant. The number of enrollments is rationed based on the amount of allocated dollars so that there is ITA training assistance available throughout the year. However, it was also noted that there would be no need to control the number of enrollments if the allocation was greater. There is no intensive outreach or recruiting effort to enroll individuals in training because such activities could very well lead to a shortfall in funding versus demand.
Engaging and Serving Employers at the One-Stop Center. The Tri-Cities One-Stop Center has an active Business Resource Unit (BRU) that is staffed by four individuals. The BRU provides a standard array of customized services for employers interested in listing jobs with the Job Service – for example, conducting visits to employers to obtain job listings; taking job orders from employers in-person, via the telephone, or by internet; providing employers with labor market information, scheduling potential applicants for Work Keys assessments, and matching job seekers to job openings. The Career Center sponsors a large job fair at Ft. Lee once a year and also participates in a large annual job fair sponsored in past years in Richmond by the LWIB X. BRAC has generated an increase in job fair and trade show activity sponsored by other entities and employers, and all of these are attended by BRU staff. In addition, employers regularly use the One-Stop facilities to conduct recruitment activities. It was estimated that an average of three employers are on-site each week for these kinds of job fairs. In the week before the site visit, the BRI reported that it had made 52 employer contacts, visited 12 employers, and hosted five job fairs.

The WIB/One-Stop staff recently had a very successful experience working with an employer operating a call-center that involved a large-scale recruiting effort. While the facility was being built, the company “moved in” with the Tri-Cities One Stop. One-Stop staff carried out a massive recruiting and screening effort, taking applications for 2,065 individuals of which 581 were hired. Currently, a WIA-funded incumbent worker pilot is being carried out by the One-Stop Center to provide WIA-eligible employees up to six months of on-site job retention services.

While the Business Resource Unit is very proactive and has achieved a great deal of success in its efforts to connect with employers and place job seekers in jobs, it was also noted that there is still much room for improving employer perceptions about the VEC and marketing the role of the One-Stop Career Centers. BRU staff expressed the belief that historically negative attitudes about the VEC/One-Stop Center among some in the employer community is changing and this shift is due in part to the personalized effort that BRU staff have made to meet with employers and develop a relationship built on trust and rapport. The WIB is hopeful that the addition of a Business Outreach person on staff, made possible through the grant from the Cameron Foundation, will help further advance efforts to make employers aware of the full range of services and resources offered through the WIB/One-Stop Centers and strengthen employer involvement and relationships.

The WIB has successfully fostered a stronger relationship between economic development and workforce development over the past few years, both with the City of Petersburg’s economic development agency and Virginia’s Gateway Region, a nonprofit economic development organization that is geographically aligned with the Crater Planning District and the WIB. The WIB and Gateway Region are currently working on developing a website with a shared portal that is planned to be launched in mid 2007. The WIB staff is now being included in Gateway Region meetings and there is consensus on the part of both the City of Petersburg and Gateway Region that the WIB (i.e., workforce development) should be at the table when economic development efforts to attract and recruit businesses to the area are being planned and carried out.

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The integration of economic development and workforce development also occurs at the One-Stop Center level. This is largely due to the One-Stop Manager’s longstanding and active involvement with economic development leaders in the area. The Tri-Cities VEC One-Stop manager has enjoyed a very strong relationship with the Crater Area Planning District from the outset of WIA and serves on its Advisory Committee. Much effort at present is concentrated on responding to the challenges presented by the BRAC and the expansion of Ft. Lee. The Crater Planning District is filtering all the job orders to the One-Stop for contractors engaged in the massive construction work occurring at Ft. Lee. The VEC One-Stop is also a member of all three Chamber of Commerce in the Tri-Cities area and the Manufacturing Association. Both the Tri-Cities and Emporia One-Stop managers have been actively involved with sharing Labor Market Information (LMI) with economic development representatives and this reportedly provides a valuable aid in bringing new businesses into the region.

One-Stop Center Partnering. As discussed above, the principal partners involved on-site at the Tri-Cities One-Stop Center are VEC and WIA. In addition, a few organizations provide some on-site presence: a staff person from Experience Works (through the Area Agency on Aging), the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS), and the Job Corps are on-site once a week. Plans are underway to bring additional partners on-site, including the Improvement Association (the WIA Youth contracted provider) once a week, a DSS staff person three times a week to provide information about DSS services and facilitate referrals, and a full-time DRS Disability Navigator.

The Tri-Cities One-Stop Center also has a very strong relationship with John Tyler Community College, the predominant training provider used by WIA customers. The Tri-Cities One-Stop also works very closely with DSS offices — DSS refers many of their TANF VIEW and Food Stamp Employment and Training participants to the One-Stop Career Center and, in turn, the Career Center refers many of its customers to DSS. The two organizations have had much success in leveraging TANF and WIA training funds on behalf of TANF/WIA participants. The One-Stop Career Center staff also visits a few DSS offices in the area on a bi-monthly basis to provide DSS clients with One-Stop/WIA information and services.

Finally, it was noted that although it does not have a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of Corrections, the Tri-Cities One-Stop Center has a strong partnership with the Federal and State Prison Complex located in Hopewell. The Emporia One-Stop Center has the same partnership with the Federal and state prisons in Greensville County and surrounding area. At the request of prison staff, VEC Veteran staff and other One-Stop staff routinely conduct workshops at the prison. For example, a BRU staff person will provide a job search workshop with mock interviews and information on resume preparation. It is expected that this relationship will continue to grow in light of the large prison population and need to assist ex-offenders with obtaining employment.

IV. Challenges and Interesting/Promising Practices
The Crater Region WIB and Hopewell One-Stop Center face several challenges to providing services and meeting the needs of job seekers and employers, including the following:

- **One-Stop Staffing Capacity Stretched.** The transition to telephone (and internet) claims filing for the Unemployment Insurance program, combined with other cutbacks in the VEC budget, has created staffing and management challenges for the VEC. VEC staff are stretched quite thin and are routinely dispatched to different offices within the region (and sometimes to different regions) to cover various required activities and commitments. Cross-training various staff to handle front desk/core-service responsibilities on a rotating basis promotes cross-program knowledge but there is a trade-off as well, since the time spent fulfilling front-desk responsibilities takes away from time that would otherwise be spent on providing counseling WIA clients, meeting with employers, and other activities that are central to One-Stop operations. The level of VEC and WIA staff was characterized as insufficient and created significant management challenges. The upcoming expansion of Ft. Lee due to BRAC (estimated to bring about 3,250 military base position over the next five years) and much more attendant economic activity will place further significant demands on the area’s workforce development system, further exacerbate the need for more staff, and create additional management challenges in the future.

- **Relative Absence of On-Site Partner Presence—But Plans Underway for Increased Partner Co-Location.** To date, the Tri-Cities One-Stop model is, with a few exceptions, a combination of standard VEC services augmented by WIA services. However, current plans call for an expansion of this basic model to include additional on-site presence by different partners including the Improvement Association (the WIA Youth contracted provider) once a week, a DSS staff person three times a week to provide information about DSS services and facilitate referrals, and a full-time DRS Disability Navigator. These additions offer potential for increased service capacity and service coordination.

The Crater Region 2000 WIB and Tri-cities One-Stop Career Center feature several interesting and promising practices, including the following:

- **Strong Partnership with Prisons/Need for Employment Re-entry Services.** The Tri-Cities One-Stop Center has a strong partnership with the Federal and State Prison Complex located in Hopewell. At the request of prison staff, VEC Veteran staff and other One-Stop staff routinely conduct workshops at the prison. For example, a BRU staff person will provide a job search workshop with mock interviews and information on resume preparation. It is expected that this relationship will continue to grow in light of the large prison population and need to assist ex-offenders with obtaining employment. Agencies within the criminal justice system are not included among WIA’s mandated partners, but the need for such a partnership exists and the Tri-Cities One-Stop Center provides an example of such a partnership.
- **Increased Linkages with Economic Development and Employers.** The WIB has successfully fostered a stronger relationship between economic development and workforce development over the past few years, both with the City of Petersburg’s economic development agency and Virginia’s Gateway Region, a nonprofit economic development organization that is geographically aligned with the Crater Planning District and the WIB. The WIB staff is now being included in Gateway Region meetings and the two entities are currently working on developing a website with a shared portal which is planned to be launched in mid 2007. The integration of economic development and workforce development also occurs at the One-Stop Center level, largely due to the One-Stop Manager’s longstanding and active involvement with economic development leaders in the area. Much effort at present is concentrated on responding to the challenges presented by the BRAC and the expansion of Ft. Lee. Staff assigned to the Business Relations Unit at the Tri-Cities One-Stop underscored the difference between the past focus on matching an individual employer with an individual job seeker and current practice of spending a great deal of time and resources on marketing and outreach that concentrate on engaging and building relationships with employers.
MINI-ASSESSMENT OF ONE-STOP CAREER CENTER AND WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD (WIB) OPERATIONS – HAMPTON ROADS WORKFORCE INVESTMENT AREA (LWIA XVI)

I. Introduction

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) authorizes funds to provide the employment and training services of various programs and organizations through a system of One-Stop Career Centers. These One-Stop Career Centers (referred to as Virginia Workforce Centers in the Commonwealth of Virginia) provide a range of employment, training, education and supportive services funded under WIA, Wagner-Peyser, and a variety of other programs. The programs and services provided through One-Stop Career Centers – and the public and private sector organizations delivering services – vary substantially across Centers and are intended to be tailored to the unique needs, environment, and characteristics of each locality. The Virginia Workforce Centers operate under the guidance of the Virginia Workforce Council and Workforce Investment Boards in sixteen Workforce Investment Areas across the Commonwealth.

This report is intended to highlight and assess local operations of the Hampton Roads Workforce Investment Board (WIB), with a particular focus on operations of the full-service, certified One-Stop Center in the city of Norfolk. Report findings are based on a one-day site visit to interview administrators and staff at the Opportunity Inc. Hampton Roads Workforce Development Board office and the Opportunity Inc. One-Stop Center in Norfolk, supplemented by readily available documentation and data.

II. Local Workforce Investment Board (WIB) Service Area and Operations

**Background.** Located in the southeastern-most corner of the state bordering both the Chesapeake and North Carolina, the Hampton Roads WIB oversees operations across eight local
jurisdictions, which includes two counties (Isle of Wright and Southampton) and the cities of Chesapeake, Franklin, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Suffolk, and Virginia Beach with a combined population of just over 1 million. The area is mainly urban (about 80 percent) but includes much smaller surrounding rural communities. The most populous jurisdictions are the cities of Virginia Beach (425,000), Norfolk (234,000) and Chesapeake (200,000). The LWIA as a whole has an unemployment rate of 4.0 percent as of September 2006.

The Hampton Roads area has one of the strongest economies in the state. The main workforce challenges for the area are an overall increase in lower paying jobs and decrease in higher paying jobs, along with a concomitant shift to different and higher skills qualifications for many jobs entering the local economy. There is also a shortage of qualified workers for growing industries. Along with much of the rest of the state, Hampton Roads has also experienced the closing or downsizing of some large manufacturing businesses. Most recently, in the beginning of Program Year 2006-07, a large Ford automobile plant began planning a large phase-out that will last through the next year. Employment projections indicate growth in services, retail trade, and transportation. Some of the largest industries in the region now are healthcare, construction, and tourism. Three military outstations (Naval Station Norfolk, Naval Amphibious Base Little Creek, and Naval Air Station Oceana) anchor the local economy. About a quarter of the population is employed by the Navy, and the three Navy shipyards employ upwards of 50,000 residents.

There is one full-service One-Stop Center for the entire Hampton Roads area, located in the downtown business center in the city of Norfolk. The One-Stop system extends services through two satellite offices located in the Paul D. Camp Community College Regional Workforce Development Center in Franklin and the Suffolk Workforce Development Center.

**WIB Staffing and Operations.** Opportunity Inc. is the fiscal agent and operator of WIA programs for LWIA XVI and serves as the staff organization to the WIB. The organization, a special purpose unit of local government, is responsible for administering workforce development programs, services and initiatives on behalf of the Hampton Roads WIB. It was established to enable the workforce system to diversify its funding base and receive funding support from sources other than the federal WIA program. With over a dozen staff, Opportunity Inc. has the largest WIB staff in the state. The overall management and staffing structure includes Executive, Finance and Audit, Strategy and Policy, Workforce Services, Youth Council and a recently created Business Services Unit. The Business Services Unit is staffed by a Senior Manager for Business Services and focuses on enhancing relationships with the business and employer community and marketing the workforce system to employers across the entire local workforce area.

The WIB contracts out the bulk of its service delivery to a private vendor, Arbor Education and Training. A portion of the In-School Youth Program is also contracted to Southampton Public Schools to run a school-based program. Arbor is a for-profit company that operates over 50 workforce programs across the country. In Hampton Roads, Arbor operates the full-service One-Stop Center in Norfolk as well as the two satellite facilities. Almost all (85 percent) of clients are served at the full-service, certified Norfolk One-Stop Center.
A major focus of Opportunity Inc. is to create employment opportunities for disadvantaged workers in areas where there are worker shortages. To this end, there is a systematic effort to identify and invest in growing, high-demand sectors of the economy. In recent years, the WIB has undertaken several studies to better understand the local economy. For example, the State of the Emerging Workforce Report profiles young people in the community – their characteristics, financial and social circumstances, and preparedness for work and careers. WIB staff report that the WIB is undertaking ongoing efforts to strategically plan their work based on the analyses they have conducted and is increasing its coordination and alignment with the economic development community.

Opportunity Inc. also developed a power point presentation and information package that is shared with all new Board members to orient them to the workforce system and their leadership responsibilities within it. The extensive package includes information on WIA programs, strategic plans, population and client characteristics, a profile of the local workforce, and even practical pointers on how to read WIB budgets and basic policies and procedures. WIB staff also reported that the WIB’s Workforce Service Committee oversees One-Stop program performance on a monthly basis.

**WIB Funding.** The Hampton Roads workforce development system has the largest budget in the state, with approximately $7.1 million in WIA funds in PY 2005, supplemented by $8.6 million from one major grant and a few small grants. The WIA budget includes substantial unobligated money from previous years – $2.5 million (35 percent of total). The total WIA program budget included $3.2 million for Adults, almost $3 million for Youth, and $650,000 for Dislocated Worker programs. The Adult and Youth Programs each include nearly $1 million in carry-over funds. In response to an unexpected upturn in WIA Adult enrollment and a slowly declining enrollment of Dislocated Workers, the WIB transferred almost $1 million of Dislocated Worker funding (combined from PY 2005 and previous years) to the Adult Program. Over 60 percent of WIA funds pay for Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) and approximately 35 percent of the WIA budget is dedicated to One-Stop operations and service delivery.

The grant portion of the budget includes an $8.2 million Department of Labor grant to help military families transition to employment within the local economy. Through this project, NEXStep Training for Transition, the Hampton Roads One-Stop and satellite centers have assisted hundreds of military spouses in obtaining training and finding employment. The WIB also received a Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) grant for $185,000 and a $215,000 grant from the Department of Education for “Projects With Industries,” an initiative that is intended to promote special coordination between employment programs and the vocational rehabilitation agencies to address the needs of clients with disabilities. The grant was awarded in PY 2003 and ended on September 30, 2006.

**WIB Partnering.** The WIB’s closest partnership for service delivery is with Arbor Education and Training and the Southampton Public Schools, the two entities that are contracted to provide WIA program services. Aside from these contracted service delivery arrangements, developing partnerships and agreements for in-kind resource sharing are brokered at the local level. WIB staff reported that they have found it consistently difficult over the years to obtain cash contributions and that contributions by partners are in-kind, usually in the form of a partner
presence at the One-Stop. The WIB also coordinates efforts with local economic development agencies, a relationship facilitated by having three economic representatives on the WIB. Through the years, economic development representatives and the WIB have collaborated on sponsoring studies to identify high-growth, high-demand areas and the WIB has concentrated its planning efforts to steer workforce development resources and activities into these areas.

III. Norfolk Opportunity Inc. One-Stop Center Operations

Background. The Opportunity Inc. One-Stop Center in Norfolk, run by Arbor Education and Training, is the largest WIA service provider in the region. The One-Stop Center offers a comprehensive set of WIA Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth services as well as a number of other services for job seekers and employers. Arbor was awarded the contract to serve as the One-Stop Operator in the fall of 2004; the previous One-Stop operator was a community college. In January 2006, Arbor purchased the Workforce Services operations of Affiliated Computer Services (ACS), a company that had operated the WIA In-School and Out-of-School Youth Program, and their staff became Arbor employees. The One-Stop Center is located on the first and second floors of a large building in downtown Norfolk within 200 feet of a bus line. The Norfolk One-Stop Center serves a highly disadvantaged population. About three-quarters of the customers are unemployed. Rates of high school drop-outs are also high and the majority do not have GEDs. Many customers also receive some form of public assistance. Customers also frequently possess multiple barriers to work and therefore may require more than just core services.

One-Stop Center Funding. The Opportunity Inc. Centers had a $1.2 million annual operating budget in PY 2005. The Norfolk One-Stop Center does not provide any fee-for-service activities and partner’s contributions to support One-Stop operations are in-kind. The WIB staff and One-Stop Center Director observed that partnering agencies do not have the funds available to contribute to paying the costs of One-Stop operations and face funding constraints of their own. Funding declines over the past 18 months forced the One-Stop Center to cut three full-time staff.

One-Stop Center Staffing. The Opportunity Inc. One-Stop Center in Norfolk houses around 42 staff in total, all of whom are Arbor employees. WIA funds are used to support almost half of the staff. These staff include a Career Developer Manager responsible for managing the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs at the Norfolk One-Stop Center as well as the satellite and information offices; a Career Developer Supervisor who oversees the work of 14 Career Developers (11 in Norfolk; 3 at other locations). A Center Operations Manager oversees both Career Development staff as well as all core-level services. The Career Developers play several roles including providing intensive and training services for adult and dislocated workers, conducting WIA client intake, providing one-on-one counseling and job search assistance, and entering client information on the WIA MIS system. Some Career Developers also conduct their own business outreach to find additional job openings and new and existing businesses where they may refer clients for work. The Career Developers reported that the workload and caseload is substantial but manageable.
The core services team includes a front desk Receptionist and two other staff. Some Career Developers also have core service responsibilities in addition to those related to WIA intensive and training services. One Career Developer works as the Resource Room Coordinator and several conduct workshops for both core and intensive service clients. A Reports/Resource Manager is responsible for collecting data from core, intensive and training programs, entering the information into MIS databases, and producing both internal and external reports on program operations. In addition, the Youth Program has a Director, two program Supervisors, four Career Developers responsible for direct service delivery as well as program outreach, and an Administrative Assistant.

**Engaging and Serving Job Seekers at the One-Stop Center.** The Opportunity Inc. One-Stop Center had approximately 20,000 visits during PY 2005, serving approximately 7,000 individual clients. The majority of Opportunity Inc. clients are walk-ins, though staff said they sometimes receive referrals from the nearby Department of Social Services and Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) offices. Clients can use self-directed core services in the Resource Area or may be offered more personalized services in one-on-one sessions with Career Developer staff. The main services available on-site at the One-Stop Center are labor exchange services (both self-help and staff-assisted), customized business services, specialized counseling and training to eligible military spouses through the NEXStep grant, and several job search and skills-building workshops.

One-Stop staff reported that the Center is becoming more popular as a job service resource, but there is a need for much more marketing and outreach to increase its visibility among community residents and awareness about the range of services offered at the facility. Staff also would like to draw in clients with more diverse education, skills and be able to assist more clients at the higher end of the income scale. Doing so would make it easier to recruit for and serve the employer community as well as improve their overall job matching rate. Currently, the One-Stop Center does not have staff or a budget dedicated to marketing or outreach. Although the Board provides some support in marketing the One-Stop Center and other service locations, it may not be reaching or is not having an impact at the local level; much of the community is not familiar with the One-Stop Center and relatively few employers know they exist. Some staff said that the system would benefit most from increased marketing at the state level, suggesting that the One-Stop Center concept would be more successful at drawing in partners, employers and businesses, and a more diverse client-base if the One-Stop Centers were more tangibly supported by higher-level state agencies.

The WIA Youth Program of Opportunity Inc. has made an active effort to reach out and engage youth in the Hampton Roads area. The program has been successful at forging partnerships and conducting outreach through the public school system, community-based organizations and with other youth-serving groups and agencies. However, outreach and partnership development in such a large and diverse area is challenging — each sub-area has its own unique characteristics ranging from smaller concentrated impoverished communities in more urban areas to spread-out and disconnected youth in more rural areas and bedroom communities. A major challenge in serving these communities is the lack of transportation resources or alternatives to bring youth to service locations where they can get one-on-one counseling and attend workshops and classes, or to help them get to job sites.
An area of consensus among staff is difficulties experienced in the poor quality, timeliness, and usefulness of the state’s performance management system, the Virginia Workforce Network (VWN). Staff said that the system was cumbersome. Data entry requires considerable staff time and does not provide access to information in formats that allow staff and management to track their performance internally and make any necessary changes throughout the year. To remedy this, the Opportunity Inc. Center switched to a different central database system used by Arbor Employment and Training in workforce centers across the country. The system, called CaseManager, is flexible enough to be used by a wide range of employment, training and human service programs including WIA, Youth Opportunity, TANF, Food Stamps, Housing, and Adult Learning. At Opportunity Inc., the system is used by Career Developers to log client information in and access direct customer records in real time. The system is used to input data on eligibility calculation, develop and update the Individual Employment Plan, comprehensive assessment measurements, and a variety of follow-up tasks. It is also used by the Reports Manager to create summary reports with more detailed information and in a variety of formats. Staff at all levels called the system a major improvement; it mirrors VWN but is easier to use, has a better interface, and is better for tracking and case management. To submit required information to the WIB and the state, the Reports Manager transfers the information from the CaseManager system to VWN. The system was implemented in September of 2005.

Key features of One-Stop operations are briefly highlighted below:

- **Core Services and Intake.** The Opportunity Inc. One-Stop Center has an area near the entrance that serves as what is typically known as a “Resource Room.” This area is equipped with a variety of information and equipment necessary to conduct a thorough and successful job search. Highlights include computers with internet accessibility and word processing capabilities; resource manuals regarding all aspects of job searching, including resume writing and interviewing skills; job search videos; faxing and phoning capabilities; printers; TDD machine; copier; resume development software; current literature on career information and partner and community resources, telephone and business directories, and other supplies for use in a job search.

The One-Stop Center has implemented a new customer flow process that staff agree improves the quality and level of personalized services clients receive. Customers are greeted by a front desk clerk who collects basic information on client characteristics and the services they seek. Instead of a group orientation to the Resource Room and many One-Stop services, customers now can view the orientation online. Following this, the clerk may set up a brief 5 to 10-minute meeting with one of the Career Developers to refer them to particular resources they can access individually through core-level services – including job search assistance and employability classes and workshops – or to staff-assisted help from one of the programs offered at the One-Stop Center. During this initial screening, Career Developers also assess the customer’s level of marketable skills. Individuals with multiple barriers are likely to be referred on to support services, workshops and classes, or for a longer meeting with a Career Developer for enrollment into WIA intensive services, for which they need to bring certain required forms. This process has reduced the wait time for customers to meet with Career Developers for
enrollment from about two weeks to only about 72 hours; their goal is to be able to do intake by the following day. Clients are also able to access personalized assistance with one of the Career Developers who works in the Resource Room on a revolving basis.

- **Intensive Services and Training.** Customers who are unable or unlikely to find work may be approved for education and training services. Individuals approved for intensive services work with a Career Developer who may enroll clients into the WIA program, assist clients with removing barriers, accessing support services, and assessing and building basic skills to obtain and maintain a job. Career Developers also offer job search assistance. Several workshops are also available at the One-Stop Center, including Basic Employment Skills Employment Training (BEST), a 5-day intensive, motivational job search workshop.

An ITA limit is set at $4,000 for each WIA participant and most training is provided by public and private vocational-technical schools and community colleges. Training must be approved by the region from a list of approved education and training programs that the WIB established based on studies of local economic and workforce characteristics. Supervisors do not approve ITAs for job training in declining industries or occupations. Staff report that the list of training programs and vendors is extensive and appropriate. About 1200 individuals received assistance through Individual Training Accounts (ITAs). Staff also said that they receive adequate training on current job trends and industry projections from the WIB. The One-Stop Center has also approved some on-the-job training contracts with several different companies.

**Engaging and Serving Employers at the One-Stop Center.** The WIB and One-Stop Center places a strong emphasis on building employer partnerships to align their strong training and retraining focus with the needs of the local economy and local businesses. WIB staff emphasized that their overall strategy was developed based on information provided by the economic development community and supported by their own more detailed research studies on employer needs and workforce characteristics. Linkages with local Economic Development agencies are strengthened by having several economic development representatives serve on the WIB. Based on co-sponsored studies, the Board set aside 10 percent of its Adult ITAs to be utilized for incumbent worker training in high demand and growth industries for PY 2005. Midway through PY 2005, the Board also developed a Business Services Unit and hired a new staff member in this position. This person will be responsible for developing employer relationships, conducting and overseeing preferential hiring agreements and customized training programs with employers, and client job screening, referrals and placement at the Norfolk One-Stop Center and throughout the area.

It is envisioned that the Business Services Unit will also work closely with the Norfolk One-Stop Center to strengthen their employer service capacity and develop relationships at the local level. The hiring of a Business Service staff is viewed as a promising development since employer linkages at the WIB level had not translated into stronger employer linkages at the service delivery level to date. The Norfolk One-Stop Center has active partnerships with about 20 employers. Within the last year, the WIB has also cross-trained Career Developers to help establish and maintain employer relationships to enhance client job matching opportunities.
Engaging employers has been particularly challenging with respect to the Youth Program. Staff suggested that additional support made available at the regional level was needed—particularly among businesses involved with the workforce system—to help foster good relationships with the business community, change the negative perceptions about program participants, and place youth in promising occupations.

**One-Stop Center Partnering.** The Norfolk One-Stop Center has established partnerships with all required mandated partners and some non-mandatory partners. Most of the partnerships involve in-kind services—providing training or consultation services or having a scheduled presence at the One-Stop facility. The strongest partnerships are with the VEC, Virginia Beach Schools Adult Learning Center, and American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). A VEC Workforce Services Representative is staffed full-time at the Norfolk One-Stop Center. The VEC Representative provides appropriate VEC job seeker services for WIA enrolled customers as well as registering customers seeking core services with the Job Service. In the past few years, One-Stop staff have partnered with the VEC in conducting BRAC grant funded outreach for and coordination of services in response to lay-offs from the Navy shipyards. AARP Senior Community Service Employment Program participants provide clerical assistance to the One-Stop Center three days per week.

A representative from Norfolk Redevelopment Housing Authority visits the One-Stop Center on a scheduled monthly basis to help referred clients find housing assistance. A representative from the Tidewater Educational Opportunity Center visits the One-Stop Center on a scheduled weekly basis to assist customers with applying to FASFA (Federal Application for Student Financial Aid), grants and scholarships to help pay for education. The Adult Basic Education agency offers GED classes on-site twice a week and conducts fee-based GED testing for enrolled customers. Job Corp also has a scheduled monthly presence. The One-Stop Center also partnered with the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) for the Projects with Industries grant from the Department of Education, and this collaboration further enhanced and strengthened the partnership with DRS. One-Stop staff suggested that more co-location by partners would enhance service capacity and integration, but they have not had success in expanding on-site partner presence beyond the established partnerships noted above.

**IV. Challenges and Interesting/Promising Practices**

The Hampton Roads WIB and Norfolk Opportunities Inc. One-Stop Career Center face several challenges to providing services and meeting the needs of job seekers and employers, including the following:

- **Difficulties Getting Other Partners to Co-locate at the One-Stop Center or Contribute Funding to Support One-Stop Operations.** Although the Norfolk One-Stop Center maintains a number of partnerships with area agencies and organizations, it has experienced difficulties in getting other partnering organizations to commit to co-location and has had little success in obtaining funding from other organizations to offset costs of operating the One-Stop Center.
• **Difficulty Using the VWN System/Lack of Timely and Reliable Performance Data.** Staff reported that an area of continuous difficulty is the poor quality, timeliness, and usefulness of the state’s performance management system, the Virginia Workforce Network (VWN). They explained that they would like to be able to use the database to assess their progress towards meeting performance standards throughout the year. More specifically, One-Stop Center staff would like to be able to view case records and query specific information. Staff found the VWN data entry frustrating and cumbersome and generally not helpful for accessing internal reports back on the inputted data for management and quality control purposes.

• **Need for Increased Marketing to Job-Seekers and Employers.** Staff identified a need for more marketing and outreach to increase the visibility among community residents of the range of services offered at the facility. The image of the One-Stop Center, particularly with respect to employers, would benefit from attracting clients with more diverse education and skills levels.

• **Lack of Transportation Constrains Youth Program’s Ability to Engage Youth and Forge Partnerships with Area Businesses.** A major challenge for the Youth Program is the lack of transportation resources or alternatives to bring youth to service locations where they can access services or to help them get to job sites. Staff noted that the program would benefit from greater regional-level support in fostering good relationships with the business community in order to change the negative perceptions about Youth Program participants and improve options for placing youth in promising occupations.

The Hampton Roads WIB and Norfolk Opportunities Inc. One-Stop Career Center feature several interesting and promising practices:

• **Developing Board Knowledge of One-Stop Operations.** Opportunity Inc. Board staff developed a power point presentation and information package for new Board members that provides an overview of the workforce system and guides them through their leadership responsibilities within it. The package contains characteristics of the population and clients served and the workforce context and emerging trends, as well as practical pointers on how to read WIB budgets and reports.

• **Efficient Client Flow Process.** The Opportunity Inc. One-Stop Center implemented a new customer flow process that staff agree improves the quality and level of personalized services clients receive. The process has substantially reduced the wait time for customers to access personalized services and be able to enroll in WIA intensive services.

• **GED Preparation Class Offered at One-Stop Center.** Opportunity Inc. has been successful in partnering with the local Adult Education program to bring a GED instructor to the One-Stop Center to provide twice-weekly GED classes. This has expanded services available at the One-Stop for existing customers and also brought some new customers to the One-Stop who likely would not have otherwise been served.
• **Regional Focus on Economic and Workforce Trends and Population Characteristics.** In recent years, the WIB has sponsored several studies and reports to better understand the local economy and align its overall strategy and activities to better serve the changing workforce. A major focus of the work of Opportunity Inc. is creating opportunities for disadvantaged workers in areas where they are shortages and where they can best match their client base to growing employment opportunities. The WIB has identified high-growth, high-demand sectors of the economy and focuses substantial education and training resources to help clients become qualified to work in those sectors.

• **New Flexible Central Database System to Track and Monitor Performance.** The Opportunity Inc. One-Stop Center implemented a new central database system, CaseManager, that staff say is a major improvement from the state’s performance management system, VWN. Direct Service staff can log client information and access direct customer records in real time, and supervisory staff can create summary reports with more detailed information and in a variety of formats.
MINI-ASSESSMENT OF ONE-STOP CAREER CENTER AND WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD (WIB) OPERATIONS – WEST PIEDMONT WORKFORCE INVESTMENT AREA (LWIA XVII)

I. Introduction

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) authorizes funds to provide the employment and training services of various programs and organizations through a system of One-Stop Career Centers. These One-Stop Career Centers (referred to as Virginia Workforce Centers in the Commonwealth of Virginia) provide a range of employment, training, education and supportive services funded under WIA, Wagner-Peyser, and a variety of other programs. The programs and services provided through One-Stop Career Centers -- and the public and private sector organizations delivering services -- vary substantially across Centers and are intended to be tailored to the unique needs, environment, and characteristics of each locality. The Virginia Workforce Centers operate under the guidance of the Virginia Workforce Council and Workforce Investment Boards in sixteen Workforce Investment Areas across the Commonwealth.

This report is intended to highlight and assess local operations of the West Piedmont Workforce Investment Board (WIB), with a particular focus on operations of the full-service, certified One-Stop Career Center in Danville. Report findings are based on a one-day site visit to interview administrators and staff at the West Piedmont Workforce Investment Board (WPWIB) and the Danville Workforce Center, supplemented by readily available documentation and data.

II. Local Workforce Investment Board (WIB) Service Area and Operations

Background. The West Piedmont Workforce Investment Board, whose administrative offices are located Martinsville, oversees workforce development services across five local jurisdictions, which includes three counties (Patrick, Henry, and Pittsylvania Counties) and two cities (Martinsville and Danville). The service area is mostly rural, including several small cities and towns (among them Martinsville and Danville), and is spread across a fairly large geographic

SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WEST PIEDMONT LOCAL WORKFORCE INVESTMENT AREA (LWIA XVII)

Geographic Area Served: 5 jurisdictions served, including 3 counties (Patrick, Henry, and Pittsylvania) and 2 cities (Martinsville and Danville).

Virginia Workforce Centers: 1 full-service certified Center in Danville; 3 satellite centers in Martinsville, Chatham, and Stuart.


Unemployment rate (July 2006): 6.9%

Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth WIA Funding (PY2006—Planning Estimate): $3,379,616

WIA Enrollments (PY 2005): 1049: Adult – 848; Dislocated Workers – 1453
area (for example, Pittsylvania County is the largest county in terms of square miles in the Commonwealth). The population across the three counties – about 200,000 residents – has decreased in recent years, reflecting a steady loss of manufacturing employment and persistently high unemployment rates.

Historically, there have been three main pillars to the local economy – tobacco, textiles, and furniture – and a dependence upon low-skill manufacturing jobs. As a result of a series of large trade-affected job closures (especially affecting the textile and furniture industry sectors), this local workforce area has the highest unemployment rate among the 16 WIBs in the state (nearly triple that of some LWIBs) and has several pockets where the unemployment rate is in the double digits (e.g., Martinsville city had an unemployment rate of 10.3 percent in July 2006). Over a ten-year period (ending in 2003), the textile and apparel manufacturers in the region shed over 10,500 jobs and overall employment in the West Piedmont economy fell by 9,142 jobs.

The local economy has been hit particularly hard over the last few years by globalization and trade-affected closures of large manufacturing plants. The industry forecast calls for continued decline in traditional manufacturing industries and growth in industries that require more skills such as health care and professional services. In addition, industries such as restaurants and retail are expected to add a large number of low-skill jobs that do not typically pay as well as the manufacturing jobs they are increasingly replacing. With the exception of registered nurses, the occupations expected to increase by the largest amount in the workforce area are low-paying and low-skilled jobs such as retail salespersons, cashiers, and food preparers and servers at restaurants.

Despite the recent decline and restructuring of the local economy, there has been some recent job formation with several new inbound call centers being established in the workforce area, the recent announcement of a new furniture manufacturing facility, which will employ an estimated 750 manufacturing workers, and a steady expansion in health care jobs. One of the challenges facing the workforce development system in helping workers adapt to a changing global marketplace involves the need to shift from a manufacturing-based to a knowledge-based employment. This transition is particularly hampered in the West Piedmont workforce area by the fact that over a third (estimated at 37 percent) of the working age population lacks a high school diploma.

**WIB Staffing and Operations.** When fully staffed, the WIB has a total of five full-time employees – an Executive Director (currently vacant), an Assistant Director, a Youth Services Coordinator, a Finance Manager, and an Administrative Assistant. The Executive Director recently retired – bringing the current staff size to four – and the Assistant Director became the Interim Director. The staff of the WIB are employees of the Pittsylvania County government, which is the fiscal agent for WIA funding. All WIB staff are funded by WIA. The Finance Manager reviews all invoices for payments and staff conduct a monitoring visit to each full-service and satellite Workforce Center once a year (along with frequent calls and informal visits throughout the year to monitor Workforce Centers activities and troubleshoot problems and improve local operations).
WIA core, intensive, and training services are made available at the full-service certified Workforce Center located in Danville (operated by Pittsylvania County Community Action) and at three satellite offices (located at the VEC office in Martinsville, the Pittsylvania County Community Action office in Chatham, and the Patrick County Adult Education Center in Stuart). During the past program year, the WIB terminated the contract of the previous One-Stop operator, in part for failure to meet performance standards and client dissatisfaction with service delivery, and brought on three new One-Stop operators (the local VEC office, Pittsylvania County Community Action, and Patrick County Adult Education).

**WIB Funding.** Because of its generally high unemployment rate and many large trade-affected dislocations, the WIB’s total WIA allocation is second highest among LWIBs in the state at nearly $3.4 million. The WIB does not have outside grant funding and notes that its large WIA allocation sometimes gets in the way of seeking and justifying receipt of other grant sources. This LWIA also receives substantial training funds through the Trade Adjustment Act (TAA) program (which goes through the local VEC offices that serve this workforce area. Relative to the small population it serves, this WIB is well funded, but also has very great need for both WIA and Trade Act funding given the challenges it has faced in the wake of a string of very large (and continuing) plant closings. There are high numbers of co-enrollments between TAA and WIA, with TAA often paying for training costs and the WIA Dislocated Worker program picking up the tab for supportive services. Because all partnering agencies are strapped for funding, costs of One-Stop operations are borne wholly by the WIB using WIA funding (with the exception of salary costs related to outstationing of staff by partnering agencies).

**WIB Partnering.** The WIB Director and staff place strong emphasis on establishing partnerships and collaborating on delivery of services. The WIB has fostered particularly strong linkages with the local VEC offices serving the 3 counties, Pittsylvania County Community Action, the local community college system, the local adult education system, and the four economic development agencies serving the various counties and cities within the service area. The WIB has contracted with the VEC to operate one of its satellite One-Stop Centers at the local VEC office in Martinsville. In other localities across the three-county area, the VEC offices are generally located near to the One-Stop and there is considerable collaboration, particularly focusing on coordination of reimbursement of tuition and support services for WIA/TAA co-enrolled individuals.

The WIB has historically maintained strong linkages with the community colleges serving the area – particularly Patrick Henry Community College and the Danville Community College. The link to the adult education system in the three counties is strong and necessary given elevated high school dropout rates and the urgent need for literacy and basic education/GED preparation for many of those served (often a prerequisite of training programs). The Adult Education Center in Patrick County operates one of the satellite One-Stop Centers. In addition, the three other One-Stop Centers are closely connected to the adult education programs in the county. Two representatives of economic development agencies serve on the WIB and the WIB executive director talks frequently with local economic development officials to keep abreast of economic development activity. While partnering agencies make available a wide range of services to meet varied needs of WIA and One-Stop customers, the WIB does not currently receive funding from any partners to support Workforce Center or WIB operations.
III. Danville Workforce Center Operations

**Background.** The Danville Workforce Center is the full-service, certified One-Stop Center for LWIB XVII. This Workforce Center is one of the four current One-Stop Centers serving job seekers and employers in the local workforce area (the other satellite Centers are located at the VEC office in Martinsville, the Pittsylvania County Community Action office in Chatham, and the Patrick County Adult Education center in Stuart). The Danville Workforce Center is operated by Pittsylvania County Community Action. This non-profit community-based organization took over operation of the center in Danville in January 2006 (along with the satellite center in Chatham) after the previous One-Stop operator’s (Danville Community College) contract to operate all Centers in the region was terminated.

The Danville Workforce Center is housed in a shopping mall. The operator is currently expanding floor space at the Center by about one-third to add space for a classroom and several offices that will house additional workforce staff, including counselors for the WIA Youth Program and two additional WIA Adult/Dislocated Worker counselors. This expansion is necessary because of the large numbers of WIA participants currently seeking services as a result of dislocations in the area. The Danville Workforce Center is a 10 minute walk or a 2-minute drive from the local VEC office serving Danville. A Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) office is located across the street from Danville Center.

**One-Stop Center Funding.** The WIB, using only WIA funding, is the only partner providing funding to pay the operating costs of the Danville Workforce Center. Funding to the Pittsylvania County Community Action organization totals $420,687 for the current year (for 7/1/06-6/30/07), which has been allocated to pay staff costs ($206,646) and to cover other costs associated with operating the center and providing training and other services ($30,000 for rent/utilities; $104,000 for WIA training (primarily for ITAs and OJTs), and $50,000 for WIA support services). Because partnering agencies are all squeezed for funding, it is not anticipated that they will contribute funding to operate the One-Stop in the future, though two partnering organizations (VEC and ABE) cover the staff costs related to outstationing staff to the Center once a week. The Danville Workforce Center does not provide fee-for-service activities to bolster funding for One-Stop operations.

**One-Stop Center Staffing.** As of October 2006, a total of seven paid full-time staff worked at the Danville One-Stop Center – one Assistant Director (who serves as the One-Stop Manager), four case managers, one data entry clerk, and one administrative assistant/greeter. These seven full-time workers are employees of the Pittsylvania County Community Action organization. These are the only full-time staff at the Center, though there are two additional staff who are outstationed there one day a week – one from the VEC (a VEC Customer Services Representative and Veteran Representative alternate each week at the Center) and one from the Adult Basic Education system (an ABE representative comes to the Center once a week to administer the TABE and provide information and referral services). Office space in an adjacent suite to the Workforce Center is currently being remodeled to increase the space at the Center by about one-third. This new space will provide room for a new classroom and several new offices.
for two new employment counselors and two youth counselors, bringing the number of Center full-time staff to 10 workers.

Engaging and Serving Job Seekers at the One-Stop Center. The Danville Workforce Center provides core services for between 45 and 75 customers who walk in for services each day. Because of the large plant closures and high unemployment rates in the region, many One-Stop customers are dislocated workers who qualify for WIA assistance (and in some cases, TAA). For the WIB as a whole, the total numbers of WIA enrolled individuals for Program Year 2005 were as follows: WIA Adults, 778 participants; WIA Dislocated Workers, 2585; and WIA Youth, 558. The Danville Workforce Center serves substantial numbers of these WIA participants, with a heavy emphasis on services to dislocated workers. As of the end of September 2006, a breakdown of the active Adult and Dislocated Worker WIA caseload at the Danville Center was as follows: WIA Adult Core, 195 participants; WIA Dislocated Worker Core, 494; WIA Adult Intensive, 116; WIA Dislocated Worker Intensive, 1,101; WIA Adult Training, 75; WIA Dislocated Worker Training, 422.

A comprehensive range of services are made available to job seekers directly or through referrals to other partnering agencies. The main services available on-site at the One-Stop Center are labor exchange services (both self-help and staff-assisted) and WIA intensive and training services. Significant numbers of those served are referred for adult literacy or basic education services to address basic skills deficits and receive GED preparation. Several of the key services available and the basic customer flow through One-Stop services are briefly highlighted below:

- **Intake and Core Services:** When job seekers first come to the One-Stop Center, they are greeted by a Workforce Services Representative who has each individual sign-in on a sheet and tries to determine the specific needs of customers. The following core services are made available to everyone who enters the Center:
  - Initial assessment of skill levels, aptitudes, and abilities;
  - Provision of employment statistics, including job vacancy listings in the labor market area, information about skills necessary to obtain the jobs listed, and information on the local in-demand occupations and the earnings and skill requirements of each occupation;
  - Job search and placement assistance;
  - Provision of information regarding performance measures of training providers in the local area;
  - Provision of information relating to availability of supportive services including childcare and transportation available in the local area and referral to such services; and
  - Provision of information regarding filing claims for unemployment compensation.

Specific forms are used to document core service accomplishments such as an Initial Assessment Form and Job Search Efforts Form. All individuals are offered the opportunity to utilize the Resource Center where substantial career information is available in a variety of formats. The Resource Center provides a self-service environment with staff available to assist customers as needed. Customers have access to computers that provide access to career information and job banks. In addition to
computers, job seekers have access to telephones, fax machines and copiers. A variety of orientations and workshops are offered to customers through the Center at scheduled intervals.

- **Intensive Services and Training.** Customers identified as needing individualized services are referred to a Workforce Services Counselor for eligibility determination. Eligibility for WIA intensive services is determined prior to referral. Intensive services are provided only if the job seeker is out of work after using at least one core service or needs the services to keep their job or advance so they can become self-sufficient. Upon determining that an individual is eligible for intensive services, a referral is made and an appointment for an interview with a Workforce Services Counselor is scheduled. Case Managers are assigned to all individuals receiving intensive services as appropriate, either at the Workforce Center or with a partner agency (i.e., Department of Rehabilitation Services, VIEW, etc). Intensive services involve counseling and case management, which begin with the development of the Individual Employment Plan (IEP). Intensive services may also include in-depth core services, pre-vocational services, individual/group counseling, comprehensive assessment, testing, financial counseling, and evaluations. If the customer has followed through on the IEP and still lacks employment and self-sufficiency, he/she may be a candidate for training.

Training may be provided after the IEP has documented the customer's receipt of core and intensive services or if a significant worker shortage in a specific segment of the workforce has been identified. The plan must show evidence that the customer needs training to obtain employment leading to self-sufficiency or that the customer has potential for success in a designated demand occupation. To meet these criteria, there must be evidence that it is likely that a customer will be successful in a designated area of expansion or a newly locating industry with specific workforce needs. A customer may also qualify by either being unemployed or earning wages that fall below the poverty guideline. A customer must be at the 8th grade reading, writing, and math level before entering into post-secondary training or it must be determined that the customer has the skills and qualifications to participate in the requested training program.

Once deemed appropriate for training, an Individual Training Account (ITA) is awarded based on the customer's choice and available funds. The customer must provide monthly attendance verification and progress reports throughout the duration of training. In addition, the customer must adhere to the WIB’s Drug Testing Policy. All WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker clients are required to pass a drug test prior to entering training services and upon the completion of training. Any client testing positive for illegal substances may request a second test, using the original specimen, within fifteen days of the positive result. WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker clients in training services are also subject to random drug testing at the beginning of each semester of training.

The WIB limit on ITAs is in most cases $5,000 (though in special circumstances and with approval of the One-Stop manager, the ceiling is as high as $15,000), with most ITA funding going to support training at area community colleges. ITA funds must be expended within two-years (though with approval from the One-Stop manager, this
period can be extended by three months in special circumstances). In addition to providing training through ITAs, the WIB also funds substantial numbers of individuals involved in on-the-job training (OJT) (in the past year, the WIB has contracted with about 25 firms to provide OJTs). Though it has funded small amounts of customized training in the past, it does not currently have agreements with firms to provide this type of training.

**Engaging and Serving Employers at the One-Stop Center.** The Danville Workforce Center places strong emphasis on providing services designed to meet the needs of individual employers. The Center provides outreach to employers about available services through staff visits to employers, distribution of brochures, and word-of-mouth. Over the past year months, Center staff has conducted visits to about 150 employers to market services. Though there are no special initiatives or funding available to partner with the employer community, the One-Stop provides a standard array of customized services for employers interested in listing jobs with the Job Service, including conducting visits to employers to obtain job listings and taking job orders from employers in-person, via the telephone or by internet.

Employers periodically use One-Stop facilities to conduct recruitment activities. Center staff have worked closely with a variety of employers to identify potential applicants and employ screening techniques to ensure that candidates closely match employer expectations. In particular, One-Stop staff have successfully worked with some large firms to facilitate hiring of workers to support opening or expanding facilities – for example, the One-Stop Career Center is available to serve as a primary location where job seekers can go to apply and be screened for jobs at new plants.

**One-Stop Center Partnering.** Two agencies outstation staff to the Danville Workforce Center – a VEC Customer Services Representative or VEC Veteran Representative comes one day each week to provide customers with information and referral and job search assistance and an Adult Basic Education Agency Representative comes one day each week to administer the TABE and provide information and referral services on ABE services available within the community. One-Stop Center staff maintain referral arrangements with many public and private organizations in the community that provide employment, training, education, and support services. While at one time there were periodic partner meetings, the One-Stop manager relies primarily on telephone contacts and meetings with individual partners to plan service delivery and flow and to troubleshoot occasional issues or problems that arise.

**IV. Challenges and Interesting/Promising Practices**

The West Piedmont WIB and Danville Workforce Center face several challenges to providing services and meeting the needs of job seekers and employers, including the following:

- **Generally Poor Economic Conditions, Steady Stream of Plant Closures, and Poor Prospects for Earning Replacement.** The chief challenge faced by the WIB and the Workforce Centers is responding to plant closures (particularly in the manufacturing sector) and high unemployment rates that complicate reemployment efforts by workers.
and workforce development staff. As discussed earlier, this WIB has the highest
unemployment rate of any LWIA in the Commonwealth and while there is some job
formation, the service sector jobs replacing many of these lost manufacturing jobs often
pay lower salaries and lack fringe benefits.

- **Basic Skills Deficiencies and High Dropout Rates Complicate Training and Job
Placement Efforts.** To further confound reemployment efforts of the WIB and
Workforce Center, many of the workers affected by plant closings lack high school
diplomas and transferable skills. As noted earlier, over one-third of the adult population
in the workforce area lack high school diplomas. This complicates training efforts
because basic skills deficiencies need to be addressed before occupational training can be
undertaken. The adult education system is currently stretched to its limit and has recently
initiated a new policy to limit enrollments in GED preparation classes to individuals who
test at an 8th grade or higher level on the TABE test. Those that cannot test at that level
will need to contact the local literacy program to bring up their TABE test scores, before
they can be enrolled in GED preparation classes. Many of the dislocated workers coming
to the One-Stops for assistance are eager to return to work as quickly as possible, yet lack
the skills needed to obtain skilled jobs that could potentially replace former earnings.

- **Transition to New One-Stop Operator.** At the beginning of the 2006, the WIB
brought on three new One-Stop program operators to replace a single operator who had
formerly been contracted to operate all One-Stops across the region. This transition has
gone well, but has taken considerable time and effort of the LWIB and Centers.

The West Piedmont WIB and Danville Workforce Center feature several interesting and
promising practices:

- **Close Linkages with the Adult Education System.** The WIB and Danville One-Stop
have had much success in forging a close partnership with the adult education system,
making it possible to connect dislocated workers who lack high school degrees or have
other basic skills deficiencies with remediation and/or GED preparation. The ABE
provider outstations a staff person each Friday at the Danville Workforce Center to
conduct TABE testing and to facilitate referral to adult literacy, basic education, and
GED preparation classes.

- **New and Incumbent Worker Training to Support Local Economic Development
Efforts.** The LWIB has been able to support local economic development efforts by
providing training for new and incumbent workers for several new employers in the area.
For example, customer service training has been provided for workers that staff several
new inbound call centers. In addition, nearly 500 incumbent workers at two local
furniture manufacturing plants have received training on quality improvement and lean
manufacturing processes. The LWIB staff also frequently contact staff at the four local
economic development agencies to gather the most up-to-date information about potential
plant closures and new firms moving into the region. Two of these economic
development agencies have representatives that serve on the WIB.
• **Collaboration with VEC on TAA/WIA Co-enrollment.** With so many workers being dislocated by trade-affected plant closings over the last decade, the WIB has been effective in developing a collaborative relationship with the local VEC offices to help ensure that TAA-eligible workers receive all of the re-employment, training, and support services they need. This has often resulted in workers co-enrolled in the WIA and TAA programs, often with TAA providing income support and paying for training and WIA dollars funding additional training costs and a range of support services that may not be covered under TAA or services for which it takes too long for TAA to reimburse (e.g., for work clothes, tools, and equipment needed for training courses).

• **Drug Testing Prior to Entry into Training to Maximize Chances of Successful Job Placement After Training.** Substantial numbers of employers conduct drug testing as part of their job hiring process. To help ensure that scarce training funds are well spent and reduce the chance that workers who have completed training will be unable to secure a job due to a failed drug test, all WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker clients are required to pass a drug test prior to entering training and upon completion of training. WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker clients in training services are also subject to random drug testing at the beginning of each semester of training.