ALAMEDA COUNTY
Workforce
DEVELOPMENT
BOARD

SUB-REGIONAL WORKFORCE NETWORK MODEL

An Implementation and Program Model Fidelity Evaluation Study

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BACKGROUND

Sub-regional Workforce Network

The Alameda County Workforce Development Board (ACWDB) is committed to meeting the needs of local area job seekers, by finding what works to serve clients, re-working program models and strategies, and/or forming new partnerships and program policies. ACWDB is also committed to continuous quality improvement. In line with these values, the ACWDB approved staff's recommendation to pivot to a **Sub-Regional Workforce Network (SWN) model** for the delivery of Workforce and Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) Adult and Dislocated Worker (A/DW) career services, from program year 2018/2019 through program year 2020/2021 (July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2021).

This shift to the SWN model was influenced by external factors, such as declining job seeker flows into career centers and declining WIOA Title I funding.[1] The SWN model ideally positions Career Services Providers (CSPs) to reach further into the community and work with external stakeholders to coordinate efforts and serve local area job seekers, therefore providing a mechanism for agile career service delivery.[2]

The SWN model places CSPs at the helm of their sub-regions (as Lead Coordinators), to deliver community-based WIOA career services, to co-enroll job seekers, leverage resources, utilize technology to reach a broader base of clients, and develop joint strategies in coordination with the following community partners:

- Adult Schools
- Community Colleges
- Community-based organizations that serve:
  - Veterans
  - People with disabilities
  - Re-entry populations
- Libraries
- Employers
- Social Services Agency
- Mandated Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I-IV partners[3]

To ensure the effectiveness of the new SWN model, ACWDB members also approved staff's recommendation to evaluate the effectiveness of the SWN model at the end of the second

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[1] WIOA Title I funds are driven by a formula that accounts for the local area's unemployment rate. The unemployment rates in Alameda County had been on a steady downward trend, resulting in a decline in Title I funds. At the same time, job seeker flows at the time weren't as steady into career centers due to a tight labor market.

[2] See SWN Diagram of Partners in Attachment I.

[3] WIOA Title I includes WIOA Adult, Dislocated, and Youth programs, WIOA Title II is the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (Adult School programs), WIOA Title III refers to the Wagner-Peyser system (Unemployment Insurance programs through the Employment Development Department), and WIOA Title IV refers to the Department of Rehabilitation.

program year in 2020 (April 1, 2020 through June 30, 2020). These actions prompted staff's evaluation of the SWN model, which are included in this report.

EVALUATION RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The SWN evaluation study attempts to answer the following research questions:

Research Question 1:

Did ACWDB's Adult and Dislocated Worker Career Service Providers adhere to the fidelity of the SWN model, by implementing core components of the model as Lead Coordinators within their sub-regions, and developing in-depth working relationships with SWN partners?

Research Question 2:

Which themes and concepts surface that suggest emerging promising practices related to the SWN model?

Research Question 3:

Which findings serve as recommendations that can be leveraged to develop promising practices, service improvements, and partnership enhancements?

METHODS

This SWN model evaluation uses an exploratory qualitative method, deemed most appropriate by the Board's Management Analyst (MA). Additional staff members were engaged in an initial content analysis of monthly service provider narrative reports to build consensus around the following SWN model core concepts:

1. Expanding job seeker access to services through outreach, cross-referrals, service coordination and co-enrollment with SWN partners;
2. Leveraging SWN partnerships to facilitate strategy and resource development; and,
3. Using technology to better reach and serve job seeker clients.

Staff members also reviewed pre-SWN model WIOA performance data (program year 17/18) and SWN implementation year WIOA performance data (program year 18/19). See Table I for more information.

The Board's MA developed two data collection tools to capture qualitative information - SWN Self-Assessment Tool and a Career Center Partner Survey, in order to give balance to the evaluation and allowing both sides of the partnership to weigh-in.

EMPIRICAL OBSERVATIONS

WIOA contract performance measures generally improved during the SWN model implementation year (PY 18-19), most prominently for the following WIOA Adult data points: training expenditures, number of On-the-Job Trainings (OJTs), percent who entered

employment, and credential attainment, in comparison to the previous program year (PY 17-18), which predates the SWN model. See table 1.

WIOA performance for Dislocated Workers slightly improved as well during the SWN Model implementation year. Most prominently, job placements in the Industry Sector and Occupation Framework (ISOF) exceeded in performance. Even in the year prior AJCC/CSPs exceeded their ISOF performance. See Table 2.

While the data suggests that there is an association between the SWN model and improved performance, without statistical testing this is an observation at face value. For instance, Board staff committed to provide ongoing technical assistance to CSPs and that could have associated with the improvement. While this evaluation study largely examines program fidelity, future studies could involve statistical testing to tease out variables or factors that are correlated to program performance.

Table 1. WIOA Adult Performance in Aggregate

Performance Measures	PY 17/18	% of Goal Achieved	PY 18/19	% of Goal Achieved
Number of New Enrollments	319	120%	262	112%
Number of On-the-Job (OJT) Trainings	23	56%	25	81%
Percent of Individual Training Accounts (ITA) in ISOF*	100%	133%	99%	132%
Percent OJT in ISOF	100%	133%	100%	133%
Percent Entered Employment	64%	85%	70%	94%
Percent Job Placements in ISOF	66%	132%	71%	142%
Percent Attained Credential	33%	54%	33%	56%
Training Expenditures	$182,665	79%	$149,099	86%

*Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Table 2. WIOA Dislocated Worker Performance in Aggregate

Performance Measures	PY 17/18	% of Goal Achieved	PY 18/19	% of Goal Achieved
Number of New Enrollments	342	105%	368	111%
Number of ITA in ISOF	89	119%	89%	119%
Percent Job Placements in ISOF	79%	158%	86%	173%
Percent Entered Employment	65%	87%	66%	88%
Percent Attained Credential	41%	68%	38%	63%
Training Expenditures	$247,032	95%	$270,411	90%

Expanding job seeker access in the context of the SWN model refers to the extent that CSPs facilitated community-based job seeker access to WIOA programs and services in ACWDB's local area. Expanding access is ideally facilitated through community-based outreach (using multiple channels), coordination efforts, cross-referrals that lead to enrollment and/or co-enrollment, utilizing technology to reach a broader base of clients, and leveraging resources to develop new opportunities that lead to increased organizational and service capacity.

1. **Community-Based Outreach** - Some providers have robust partnerships far-reaching into communities, carrying-out services and WIOA workshops onsite at partner locations. Service delivery at partner location allows for the community and partners to gain familiarity with WIOA services and programs, enabling the community to identify CSPs for career and employment assistance. The following serves as examples from our CSPs of conducting community-based outreach:

   - **Eden Area AJCC** delivers WIOA workshops offsite quite often with Chabot College, Castro Valley Adult School, and San Leandro Adult School, which may be *linked* to their ability to garner so much partner participation in their quarterly meetings. Eden Area AJCC also invites Adult School students onsite for a tour of the AJCC, which also heightens their visibility in the community.

     The Eden AJCC also has a staff person responsible for outreach, which given the SWN model design, demonstrates a real commitment to the model's design and likely linked to better partnership outcomes.

   - The **North Cities Career Center** delivers weekly WIOA classroom presentations at the Berkeley Adult School and credits that level of outreach for their enrollment success.

   - **Tri Valley Career Center** partners with the Federal Correctional Institution in Dublin to deliver workshops onsite to women inmates.

2. **Cross-referrals, Coordination, and Co-enrollment** in context of the SWN model refers to the extent that AJCC/CSPs worked closely with SWN partners to establish a protocol for referral-making and receiving, to serve job seeker clients.

   Coordination refers to the extent that providers played a role in streamlining job seeker services with SWN partners to facilitate successful service navigation and enrollment.

Co-enrollment refers to the strategic enrollment of a client into more than one complementary program and service, with an aim to enhance client outcomes. Co-enrollment can be a vehicle for achieving more difficult WIOA outcomes, especially when efforts are coordinated with organizations that have a strong track record of achieving similar outcomes.

Part of the success of strategic co-enrollment also depends on the likelihood that the client is eligible to receive services at a partner organization. Such determination can be discovered initially by working closely with partners and co-orienting one another at the beginning of a new partnership or by cross-walking program eligibility requirements. This requires a level of research and active partnership, one that relies on building consensus early-on.

The following are AJCC/CSP examples of cross-referrals, coordination, and co-enrollment:

- **Eden Area AJCC** has a referral form and meets with partners to establish a co-enrollment process. These actions demonstrate a commitment to co-enrollment as an organizational practice, not leaving the partnership open to a referral process alone. Additionally, Eden Area AJCC coordinates quarterly partner meetings with frequent partner turnout.

- **All providers** coordinate onsite employer engagement efforts, such as onsite recruitments (Eden Area AJCC and North Cities Career Center) or other employer engagement tactics such as employer orientations (Tri Cities Career Center) or Coffee Breaks with employers (Tri Valley Career Center).

- **Most providers** also engage in seasonal job fairs, providing visibility in the community. These efforts help the business community identify community-based recruitment assistance and can be a mechanism for businesses and job seekers to learn about career services and programs.

- **North Cities Career Center at the College of Alameda** has a visual enrollment matrix that is enlarged and posted in their office for all staff to review and track enrollment progress. Operationally, this practice is helpful and builds a collective sense of performance the team must meet. A similar visualization around strategic co-enrollment can help move this sound practice to the next level by involving new partners in the practice of helping to achieve other WIOA performance, such as credential attainment.

- Being located on a college campus can also support outcomes such as credential attainment, as students are working toward degree or certificate completion, may be enrolled in another program on campus, and may meet the WIOA Adult priority population definition.[4] It should be noted that an in-reach "only" strategy is not suggested but rather a mix of in-reach to community college students and outreach to the general population.

- **Tri Valley Career Center** co-enrolls women at a local domestic violence shelter into Metrix Online Learning, an online training software that leads to industry-recognized certificates purchased by the ACWDB for use by job seekers. This effort facilitates a touchpoint with our system, allowing for the possibility of co-enrollment into WIOA when appropriate.

3. **Use of Technology** in the context of the SWN model refers to the level which providers leverage technology platforms, applications, and websites, to reach and engage and ultimately serve a broader base of clients across the workforce system. The following are some examples of providers' use of technology to connect with the workforce system:

- **All providers** maintain some level of website presence through their websites and some through social media outlets. Some centers have additional technology features.

- **Tri Cities Career Center's** use of Appointlet allows the public to request appointments with Career Center staff. They also maintain an online workshop request form to solicit requests from the community for WIOA presentations and workshops.

- **Tri Valley Career Center** was an early adopter of the Zoom platform, enabling wider access to workshops and information. Tri-Valley Career Center also produces a newsletter that is shared via Constant Contact, keeping the community informed with relevant job seeker and employer content.

4. **Leveraging Resources** in the context of the SWN model refers to the extent that CSPs worked with SWN partners and other stakeholders to maximize partner resources (fiscal, in-kind, and/or programmatic, to stretch existing resources and complement workforce development services). Below are some CSP examples of leveraging resources:

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[4] ACWDB's WIOA Adult priority populations were set by State directives. To be considered a WIOA Adult priority population, a job seeker would have to fall into one of the following population categories: Veterans, Veteran spouses, individuals who are basic skills deficient, low-income, individuals with disabilities, and re-entry clients.

- **Most CSPs** have tapped into ACWDB grants to complement job seeker services, such as the Storm Grant and the Biotech and Advanced Manufacturing Rapid Re-employment grants to serve laid off workers. Some providers have also been more active in applying for the State's Accelerator Grants, which are funds provided to innovate workforce programming for target groups.

- **Eden Area AJCC** frequently collaborates with the Alameda County Social Services Agency and leverages supportive services for co-enrolled clients, as well as the Agency's employer contacts and community events.

Sub-Regional Workforce Evaluation

Research Question 1:

Did ACWDB's Adult and Dislocated Worker Career Service Providers adhere to the fidelity of the SWN model, by implementing core components of the model as Lead Coordinators within their sub-regions, and by developing in-depth working relations with SWN partners?

CSPs aligned with some of the core components of the SWN model, especially building more traction with <u>some</u> of community-based SWN partners, than in previous years. In the review of monthly narrative reports and other documents, providers were much more active in the community than in previous years. CSPs collectively and more prominently engaged adult schools, employers, community colleges, and libraries. While these partnerships are more robust, CSPs **will need to formalize their partnerships to establish an actual co-enrollment process.**

Partnerships with community-based organizations that serve people with disabilities, re-entry, and veterans has yielded mixed results. Some providers have relationships with entities that serve these groups, but not necessarily connections to CBOs specifically. Other providers are at the very beginning of their partnership journeys with these CBOs. While some CBOs are not represented physically within specific sub-regions, their clients may reside in all parts of the county, making such a partnership worthwhile. While CSPs built more strategies with the Community Colleges, and Adults School, they now also need to **build more robust partnerships with CBOs.**

Providers (not including the Eden Area AJCC) need to make greater strides with the Social Services Agency. This is an opportunity that can be facilitated though ACWDB's Modified Local Plan, whereby one of the three new Local Plan partnerships is with another department within Social Services to serve two distinct groups. While Social Services Agency is listed as a partner in the SWN model, the partnership seems to need a level of depth that is not yet there for most of the providers.

While coordination and co-enrollment has occurred over the past couple of years, **a more formal co-enrollment process needs to be in place.** Most providers are using a referral form, but an actual co-enrollment process should be documented and developed in tandem with partners so that referrals convert to co-enrollment.

Lastly, **the number of successful quarterly partner meetings led by the providers needs some overall improvement**. The Eden AJCC seems to be successful in garnering partner interest and attendance often and may be able to share some peer strategies.

<u>**Survey Findings**</u>

Staff also surveyed SWN partners to provide balance to the self-assessments and themes related to information/referrals, partner communication, partner engagement, and offsite/community presence surfaced.

- **Information and Referrals**
  CSPs scored highest on their ability to provide relevant information, attending to referred clients, and coordinating services.

- **Partner Communication**
  CSPs scored relatively high on statements related to activities requiring partner communication.

- **Partner Engagement**
  SWN partners generally rated partner engagement with their CSPs as middle-of-the road or average.

- **Community Presence and Offsite Services**
  CSPs generally scored the lowest in this category, meaning that SWN partners were neutral or disagreed that CSPs had robust presence with their organizations. While some CSPs had examples of offsite service delivery, such as partner orientations or outreach, CSPs generally scored lower on statements related to in-person interactions or offsite program connections within the community.

- **SWN Partner COVID-19 Concerns and Response**
  SWN partners were also asked COVID-19 impacts on their client population and ways in which their AJCC/CSPs could help in assisting job seekers during the pandemic:

  What are you most concerned about regarding COVID-19 on your client population?

  Lack of computer and internet access, as well as disruption to service and facility access were most cited as concerns followed by:

- Job loss
- Disruption to course completion
- Vulnerable to the disease
- Inability to access food
- Cost of living and rent
- Shortage of opportunities for people with disabilities
- Disruption to hiring plans

What role do you think your local Career Center/CSP can play in assisting your clients with COVID-19 related issues?

Partners believe that CSPs can provide information, online resources, host virtual job fairs (most common response), help them understand opportunities and employers who are hiring, and help them understand transferrable skills. The Tri Valley Career Center has been credited by more than one partner for their robust and relevant information-sharing.

Research Question 2:

Which themes and concepts emerged that suggest emerging promising practices related to the SWN model?

Some emerging promising practices have surfaced in the implementation of the SWN model. To elevate *emerging* practices to *promising*, practices must demonstrate some level of consistent improved outcomes over a longer period of time. As it stands, the following are emerging promising practices:

- **Service delivery, orientations, and workshops onsite at partner location seems to yield promising results in terms of co-enrollments, building partner trust and rapport, and ensuring visibility in the community.** As seen with the Eden Area AJCC, this level of community visibility seems to be positively linked to garnering partner interest and attendance in their quarterly partner meetings.

- Establishing a co-enrollment process with SWN partners is a complement to the referral process, likely resulting in better outcomes.

- Providers who have a staff-person dedicated to outreach, at least part time, seem to have a better presence in the community, which allows for cross-sharing information with partners that can lead to additional opportunities.

- Employer engagement tactics, particularly Coffee Breaks with Employers in the Tri Valley, seems to yield positive responses from job seekers. In a relaxed setting, job seekers can converse with employers about opportunities with the company.

- A Community Newsletter seems to be a key strategy in keeping partners and their clients well-informed about services and programs.

Research Question 3:

Which findings serve as recommendations that can be leveraged to develop promising practices, service improvements, and partnership enhancements?

1. *Require dedicated Outreach Worker to staffing, to ensure that community-based reach is possible and often;*

2. *Deliver services offsite much more often particularly with a focus on community-based organizations, (in light of COVID-19, attend partner virtual meetings often);*

3. *Establish a co-enrollment process that complements referral processes that lends itself to successful co-enrollment of clients;*

4. *Develop and distribute a community newsletter and share often to SWN partners and clients, and,*

5. *Continuously develop and evolve robust strategies to adapt services, in light of COVID-19 impacts with considerations to those whose Unemployment Insurance benefits may be on the brink of exhaustion and in closer partnership with SWN and Local Plan partners.*

FINAL NOTE

Since ACWDB and staff members are committed to responsive service delivery, the SWN model is likely to change course and a new model may be adopted. However, the recommendations in this report are flexible and relevant enough to be applied to any new model in the future.

ATTACHMENT I – SWN Diagram of Partners

SUB-REGIONAL WORKFORCE NETWORKS IN
North Cities, Tri-Cities, Valley, and Eden*

PUBLIC LIBRARY

LEAD PROVIDER COORDINATION

ADULT SCHOOLS

BOARD PRIORITY EXPAND ACCESS THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION

COMMUNITY COLLEGES

CBO VETERANS EXPERTISE

TARGET GROUPS
- Long-term Unemployed
- Re-entry
- Public Assistance Recipients
- Veterans
- People with Disabilities

CBO INDIVIDUALS W/ DISABILITIES EXPERTISE

SOCIAL SERVICES

BOARD PRIORITY EXPAND ACCESS TO INDIVIDUALS W/ DISABILITIES

MANDATED PARTNERS

EMPLOYERS (OJT & JOB PLACEMENT)

CBO REENTRY EXPERTISE

*Serves as the area's Comprehensive One-Stop Career Center