

The purpose of the Executive Summary is to provide a concise overview of the Little Rock Region site report. This summary is intended to be shared with regional leaders so they may respond to the recommendations with action strategies for process improvements.

Strengths



Highlights of Collaboration

Analysis: The quality and diversity of partners in the Little Rock AWC and the effectiveness of their collaboration makes this site a true community resource for many low income and unemployed customers. Some examples of collaboration are:

- ✓ All primary workforce programs are co-located in a modern, professional environment and have a working collaborative in place that is solution focused and maximizes resources.
- ✓ This site presents a picture of a consensus leadership group with clearly defined roles and a positive history of collaboration.
- ✓ A clear and focused team feeling to the customer service flow starting with an excellent front desk receptionist who actively greets and directs customers.



Highlights of Customer Service

Analysis: From the professional customer service staff at the front desk to staff “handing off” customers with personal face to face onsite referrals, the focus is on meeting customer needs. Serving the high volume of customers is a priority.

- ✓ Leadership expectations for quality customer service and meeting customer needs is understood by all staff.
- ✓ The wide range of partners and services available onsite is customer friendly and resource effective.
- ✓ Referral processes are developed and handoffs of customers to appropriate staff is supported and encouraged.



Highlights of AWC Brand

Analysis: The Little Rock Center is making a name for itself and working hard to collaborate around the Arkansas Workforce Center brand to meet the vision of a truly integrated, seamless One Stop Workforce Center.

- ✓ Staff embrace the vision of using the brand/logo and marketing all partners as the AWC.
- ✓ The Business Plan has a marketing strategy and much of it has been accomplished. Outreach efforts are ongoing.
- ✓ The AWC brand is acknowledged in the field by workers and respected as a meaningful project.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Challenges

- Some of the organizational challenges the Little Rock Center faces will be sustaining the resources needed to keep the facility, technology and staffing up to the demands of the tremendous number of people served each month.
- The co-managed collaborative approach to site leadership is vulnerable when there is leadership turnover, since it operates on trust and relationships.

Recommended actions:

- The Certification process and Business Plan were primarily onetime events more than active process improvement tools. There would be value in the Workforce Center Partners Council working from an active business planning process. The initial focus could be more effective coordination of employer/business services.

SERVICE INTEGRATION AND COLLABORATION

Challenges

- Communication is a constant challenge, with competing staff and customer priorities and with needs always shifting. Maintaining awareness of changing resources and services is a challenge. Making a commitment to well organized and well run staff and partner meetings is difficult. Posting partner meeting minutes shortly after each meeting or emailing them to all staff was planned, but is not being done timely or consistently.
- Customer flow and waiting lines work against the service model at peak times and especially at quarter change for UI (Unemployment Insurance). The team has worked to mitigate the impact, but it is still a problem. The image of the AWC as more than the “Unemployment Office” is hard to change when you walk into long lines of UI claimants at the front door. Unemployment customer service is a major challenge.
- The TEA (Transitional Employment Assistance) program is still in the process of being fully integrated into DWS (Department of Workforce Services) and into the AWCs. The full integration of TEA/Work Pays into the Workforce system is an evolving issue for DWS as a state agency. It also needs attention at the Little Rock Center.
- Cross training needs more structure and purpose. The role of the DWS “Workforce Specialist” and the goals of interagency cross training needs to be better defined and more systematically

Recommended actions:

- An internal time limited, workgroup of partner staff could meet to problem solve all aspects of the unemployment customer flow challenge. It could focus on scheduling and using online resources to reduce peak volume, making sure unemployment customers are seen as dislocated workers in need of more than a check, and other creative approaches to service design.
- Cross training needs a more formal structured approach and purpose to supplement the informal peer process currently in place. The role of the DWS “Workforce Specialist” and the goals of interagency cross training need to be better defined and more systematically addressed. Solicit staff input from all partners to structure this training around agreed upon priorities (such as AJL) (Arkansas Job link).

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION**Challenges**

- Setting up a meaningful customer satisfaction process is challenging, but there are many models around the country that work and it is an investment that will pay dividends.
- There is currently no systematic process in place to assess how satisfied internal customers (staff) are with their work environment, service design, training, etc.

Recommended actions:

- Establish a systematic customer satisfaction process that gathers, reports, and uses job seeker and employer feedback to improve services.
- Conduct an annual climate survey to give staff a chance to provide feedback as internal AWC customers.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**Challenges**

- Since partners have different program years, different databases, and different goals and targeted outcomes, it will take some centralized state level planning to help sites develop a meaningful performance profile for AWCs.

Recommended actions:

- Partners need to focus on partner performance goals and outcomes once a quarter at their partner meetings and develop a simple way to report critical measures and outcomes to all staff.

AWC BRAND**Challenges**

- Reaching employer customers is a significant challenge and the AWC has limited resources devoted to outside sales and marketing.
- The Little Rock Center website does not display the AWC brand. There are no interactive links that comprehensively describe the services available at this Center. There is a link to Arkansas Job Link, however, it was not active when this review occurred.

Recommended actions:

- A specific marketing plan for employers, followed by all and led by the WIA (Workforce Investment Act) One Stop Operator is needed to meet demand.
- Update the Little Rock Center website with the AWC brand prominently displayed. Expand the information available on the website to comprehensively describe all of the partners and services (for both job seekers and employers) available as this center.

BUSINESS SERVICES/SERVICES TO EMPLOYERS**Challenges**

- Communications between staff who serve employers needs to increase. The spirit and willingness is there, but a systematic process is missing.
- The AWC brand awareness is still low with employers based on staff experience. It will take a collaborative effort to make a difference.
- Arkansas Job Link is not regularly used by all partners which limits its effectiveness and impact.

Recommended actions:

- Form a Center wide Business Services Team of all staff who actively provide outreach to employers and designate a Team Lead with some authority to supervise efforts and direct resources.
- There are many national models for Workforce Center's collaborative Business Services teams. Some are united under one agency; others are partner collaborations with a designated leader.
- Require all staff who provide outreach to employers to use AJL as the software for tracking and employer contacts and accounts.

Arkansas Workforce System Evaluation

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