

**St. Lawrence County Workforce Development Board  
Comprehensive Three-Year Local Plan  
January 30, 2006**

**“Findings”**

**Section I: Local Workforce Investment Profile**

**Question #5: Infrastructure Challenges and Strategies**

Specific strategies to sustain the local system over the next three years are:

1. Reassess One-Stop staff members' (WIA and partner) contributions to the efficiency of meeting the regulatory, strategic, and performance goals of the Workforce Investment Act and Board.
2. Look for additional contributions from partner agencies that can further the achievement of Common Measures.
3. Continue gradual staff reductions through attrition from retirement, non replacement or staff transfers to other agencies.
4. Encourage system partners to increase their presence at the One-Stop Canton Center as these partners face their own lease renewals reflecting increasing infrastructure costs.
5. Actively look for non-system, but associated agencies to share fixed rental costs and to potentially enhance One-Stop System Services.
6. Focus on the core needs of our customers to maximize system resources.
7. Focus on technology and self help as a means to maximize system resources.
8. Seek staff training that will be effective in increasing productivity and quality of services, but purchased in a cost effective manner, such as, but not limited to, web-based training.

**Section II-B: Local Area Strategic Planning Progress**

**Subsection #1: Summary of Progress**

Workforce skills and credentials, and actions that have been identified to meet employer demand in the areas of the local workforce growth are:

1. Education: Upgrading skills of current teacher aide employees to meet the need for teacher assistant education and certification. Career counseling for career changing or progressing individuals to choose local training available for a teaching profession on the Elementary, Middle or Secondary school level due to the replacement needs in the present and near future.
2. Health Care: Career counseling the unemployed or underemployed to pursue careers as Personal Care and Home Health Aides, Certified Nurse Aides,

- Licensed Practical Nurses, and Registered Nurses due to the high demand for these skilled, certified or licensed persons.
3. **Government:** Due to the projected need to replace many retiring local civil servants now and in the foreseeable future, continue to career counsel public regarding current and future openings; and inform public how to apply and prepare for such openings. Most openings will require education in the nature of 1 to 2 year certificates and Associate Degrees. Education is locally available from approved providers to prepare most future government employees.
  4. **Professional:** Maintain focus on career counseling for the following professional positions, advising the public of educational, training or apprenticeship opportunities in the following areas: Accountants (all levels), General and Operations Managers, Automotive Technicians, Plumbers, Refrigeration Mechanics, Professional Commercial Drivers, High Level Administrators and their Assistants.
  5. **Retail:** The skills most needed in the retail sector include work maturity and customer service skills.

**In aligning the above skills, and education with the Board's Strategic Plan the following goals are to be ongoing:**

1. The Board will support the focus of career counseling by Workforce Investment Act staff through education and information of the public to those areas of growth and demand in the aforementioned areas. This will be accomplished through the One-Stop Manager's direction and supervision and through staff education; as well as through procurement of supportive materials to be made available to the Resource Room and staff. This goal will be implemented immediately to involve all supervisory and counseling staff of the WIA program. At the end of the first year of this goal, an evaluation will be conducted by the One-Stop Manager as to the goals achievement and effectiveness specifically as it relates to Individual Training Accounts and/or other training or Intensive Services provided. At that time, a reevaluation of staff knowledge and training, as well as need for new or additional informational materials will be conducted for the purpose of continuing to increase effectiveness of counseling in the area of informed customer choice.

**Summary of Goal 1:**

**Resources:** Staff Training through webinars, electronic educational materials, purchase of additional career counseling materials, as well as stocking resource room with educational provider materials. Seek additional monies needed through grants for purchasing materials and training (lack of such funding will not stop implementation).

**Involved:** WIA staff initially, and after a one year evaluation, partner staff will be informed and educated to efforts, success, and areas of lack of success.

**Timetable:** Immediate and ongoing.

**Benchmark:** Evaluation of ITA's and other Training and Intensive Services at the end of each program year.

**Current Status:** Ongoing.

2. The Board supports promoting 1-2 year degree programs, especially for, but not limited to, displaced workers. The Workforce Investment Act staff will perform with their Employment Services Partners' rapid response to dislocations, as well as provide rapid response individual counseling at the resource room level to advise displaced/dislocated workers of the opportunities for further education available through free Federal financial aid (such as the PELL program) ITA's, and the 599 program and, if applicable, through the Trade Act. Employment opportunities in growth areas will be the direction of career counseling.

### **Summary of Goal 2:**

**Resources:** Workforce Investment and Employment Services staff with no additional funds required.

**Involved:** The above staff to include resource room staff.

**Timetable:** Immediate implementation as a short term and long term goal.

**Benchmark:** At the end of each program year, an evaluation of displaced worker training services will be monitored by the One-Stop Manager.

**Current Status:** Ongoing

3. The Board supports the collaboration between Economic Development agents and agencies and the Business Services interests of the Workforce Investment Act Program. The Board also acknowledges the need to work with local manufacturers to better train and, therefore, retain their workforces. To this end, the Board sets as a goal the most direct and continuing communication between existing businesses, and new or expanding businesses being worked with by Economic Development staff and the counseling staff of the Workforce Investment Act Program. All new and expanding employers will be made aware of and encouraged to use the services of the Workforce Investment Act Program and its staff and the services of the Department of Labor and its personnel. All training incentives will be explained and promoted.

### **Summary of Goal #3:**

**Resources:** Availability of WIA staff member or One-Stop Manager to accompany Economic Developers to meet new or expanding business representative to explain existing services. No additional costs are anticipated.

**Involved:** WIA staff; Employment Services Staff; Economic Developers.

**Timetable:** Immediate and ongoing.

**Benchmark:** Number of Job Orders and Referrals to Job Orders at the end of each program year.

**Current Status:** Ongoing.

**Other Strategic Goals not directly related to alignment with needed workforce skills, but essential to the operation of the Workforce Investment System are:**

4. The Board acknowledges a need for an education or re-education program for its members on the partner agencies mission(s), resources, past and present strategies to meet regulatory and/or performance goals so as to align and develop the Boards goals and oversight capacity.

**Summary of Goal #4:**

**Resources:** Agency personnel to make presentations to Board Members. No additional cost to be incurred.

**Involved:** WIA Staff and all Partner Agency Presenters.

**Timetable:** Meeting scheduled from March 9, 2005 through March 23, 2005.

**Benchmark:** All Board training accomplished by March 23, 2005.

**Status:** Committee assignments based on knowledgeable Board members was accomplished by December 14, 2005.

5. The Workforce Investment Board has as a strategic goal that remote areas of St. Lawrence County will have a representative of the Workforce Investment Act visit access sites in Ogdensburg and Massena on a weekly basis; and the Gouverneur Access Site on a request basis to better serve this geographically large county.

**Summary of Goal #5:**

**Resources:** Agency personnel. No additional costs will be incurred.

**Involved:** WIA Staff and One-Stop Manager.

**Timetable:** Immediate and ongoing.

**Benchmark:** One-Stop Manager to assign responsible staff and monitor monthly.

**Current Status:** Ongoing.

**Subsection #2: Aligning Service Delivery**

Business Services are aligned to respond to local market demand through a close linkage between St. Lawrence County Economic Development efforts, DoES, WIA Business Services and with One-Stop Resource Room self help and Core Services. Businesses in need of employees are contacted routinely or initiate contact with the Business Services' staff member(s) and Employment Services staff to place job orders and request referrals

(core); and to inform job seekers of open positions (core-labor exchange referrals without further screening- career counseling and staff assisted job search or placement assistance). New and expanding businesses are invited to “orientations” at the One-Stop Career Center in the Resource Room (core) and to Intensive and Training Services informational presentations. One-Stop facilities and affiliate sites are made available to employers for their application, screening, and informational and interviewing process (core service). Potential employees are screened for eligibility and appropriateness for employer training (OJT); employers are offered assistance in exploring incumbent worker training options; referrals are made to open positions from individuals completing WIA training services; individuals on OJT or other employer based training are given counseling/case management services and follow up services to aid in employee retention.

In addition, Business Services issues, specifically in regard to the needs of Employers that are expanding or new to the local area, are discussed at Board Meetings and proactive services (often training needs) are recommended and resources committed. As the Board is composed of more than 50% business representatives the Board is very responsive to local market demand. Also, the Board, as stated in Strategic Goal #1, directs the WIA staff to educate and inform, through core, intensive and training services, the public of those areas of growth and demand. At its most recent meeting, the Board has established a Committee to explore Healthcare Employers Needs.

### **Subsection #3: Measuring Achievement**

Benchmarks developed to measure progress toward achieving the local Board’s Strategic goals are stated in the aforementioned strategic goals. For example, Goal #1: informed career counseling to the public in areas of locally high demand, will be measured by the number of ITA’s and other Training and Intensive Services at the end of each program year; Goal #3: meeting the needs of local business through direct communication of needs to WIA staff, will be measured by the number of job orders and referrals to job orders at the end of each program year. As progress is made on each of the goals, new measurements will be developed. Progress is communicated to the WIB and WIB committees at regular meetings. Our web page and marketing materials will highlight our measurable achievements when appropriate. If results show that certain systems or services need to be updated, then the appropriate personnel will become involved in developing new procedures or to incorporate changes.

### **Section III: Integration of WIA Compliance with Strategic Planning**

#### **Subsection 2, Question #1: Selecting and Certifying Operators**

One-Stop Operator Recertification Application has been sent to Margaret Moree's office by Fed-Ex and should arrive by January 31, 2006.

#### **Subsection 2, Question #3: Priority of Service**

The Priority of Service Policy is monitored by the One-Stop Manager and his designee in the approval process of all expenditures for intensive and training services on a daily basis. The form submitted is a part of each adult or dislocated workers file. All counseling staff's justifications use the "priority of service" as supportive factors for the use of any intensive or training monies for adult and dislocated workers. Youth eligibility is determined by the existence of this priority of service factors. The Board will revisit this policy when and if WIA funds become so restrictive that it is deemed necessary to deny services to some adult or dislocated workers. The Board expects that this will be brought to its attention by the One-Stop Manager.

#### **Subsection 2, Question #7: Youth Services**

The "dramatic decline" in anticipated numbers served for PY05 for Older and Younger Youth is a reflection of the following facts/factors:

1. There has been a steady decline in dollars to service youth since 2001. From a high of \$904,000 in PY01 to a low of \$596,000 in PY05.
2. Since Youth are best served through programs such as Internships and the Summer Youth Program, "hard" services rather than "soft" services alone, the number of youth served has declined as dollars have declined.
3. There were no carry-in funds left over to bring into 2005; hence, less youth could be served.
4. In 2005, the New York State minimum wage was increased to \$6.00/hr. and the Board approved this wage for our Summer Youth Participants which led to a smaller number of youth being served.
5. As in other areas, there has been an increase in overhead costs which is also impacting service levels.

#### **Subsection 2, Question #8: WIA Adult Dislocated Worker and Wagner-Peyser Services**

Cost and performance data for eligible training providers used by the LWIA is monitored by the staff. This is a relatively easy task given the small number of training providers available and used in the local area. The majority of eligible training providers are eligible under Title IV of the Higher Education Act. Training providers most often used are SUNY Canton College; SUNY Potsdam College; Jefferson Community College;

North Country Community College; and St. Lawrence-Lewis BOCES. The two proprietary schools most often used are regulated by the NYS Education Department Bureau of Proprietary Supervision and are providers on the State ETP list. Staff is aware of the success of local eligible training providers in assisting customers through education and training to successfully complete training and achieve training related employment. Counselors solicit customer feedback regarding training provider performance. Staff provides appropriate information for informed customer choice as inquiries or requests for training assistance are received. In line with an identified labor market demand for trained people in the Healthcare Field, staff counsels customers for these occupations and supports them with ITA's. The local list of demand occupations is determined by the Department of Labor, Division of Research and Statistics for the North Country and used when approving ITA's. WIB Guidelines to evaluate appropriateness of training in non-demand occupations are part of the On-The-Job Training Guidelines and used to evaluate and approve OJT proposals.

The WIB is currently working on a process of guidelines and instructions for the Annual Recertification for Eligible Training Providers regarding Cost and Performance Data. The target date for this is to be established and approved at the June 2006 Board Meeting.

## **“OBSERVATIONS”**

### **Support Services**

The St. Lawrence County Workforce Investment Board has determined that the best means of providing financial assistance to customers enrolled in Workforce Investment Act (WIA) training or service(s) activity(ies) is through a Supportive Services Payment System. The purpose of this Supportive Services System is to enable customers to participate in those activities authorized under WIA Title I. Each customer's needs will be determined on an individual basis and justified in the Individual Employment Plan (IEP). Supportive Services may only be provided to individuals who are participating in registered core services.

#### Types of Services Offered and Under What Circumstances

Any Supportive Service payments provided to customers will be justified by using the Local Workforce Investment Area's (LWIA) approval process, documented in the IEP and revisited periodically. All necessary documentation such as invoices, time sheets, mileage sheets, child care forms, and vouchers are in place and are presently being used by the LWIA as documentation for the reimbursement of Supportive Service payments.

Supportive Service payments may include, but are not limited to:

#### Transportation Payments

- a. In-County mileage allowance will be paid at a rate of \$.17 per mile for customers who are in training or who are in need of such service to participate.
- b. Out-of-County mileage will be paid at a rate of \$.17 per mile for customers who are in training.
- c. Automobile Repair(s): Where an automobile is required to participate in training. Maximum payment of \$500.00.
- d. Automobile Insurance: Where an automobile is required to participate in training. Maximum payment of \$1,000.00.
- e. Automobile registration, permit, and license costs as determined by New York State Department of Motor Vehicles are payable up to a maximum of \$100 per individual need.

Health Associated Payments including medical, dental, eye, drug and alcohol abuse counseling, referral services, individual and family counseling services, special services, and materials for individuals with disabilities may be provided on an

individual basis. Payments associated with these services shall be reasonable, based on local market price conditions. These payments must be related directly to the customer's employment goal, and justified in the IEP.

Child Care: Customers will be referred to outside sources of childcare funding and be expected to complete the application process prior to commitment of WIA Program funds. WIA Title I funding may supplement the difference of partial assistance received from outside agencies up to \$2.00 per hour per child when such need is documented in the IEP. If outside funding sources are exhausted or if a customer is denied assistance due to excess income or length of training program, WIA Title I funding may reimburse customers up to the aforementioned limits.

Meals and Temporary Shelter can be provided for out-of-county training for customers determined in need of such payments as documented in the IEP. Meals for out-of-county training will be reimbursed at \$15.00 per day for each day of attendance. Out-of-county temporary shelter payments will be based on local market price conditions and may include a weekend stay when deemed necessary.

Payments for other reasonable expenses required for participation in services, such as clothing and equipment, will be considered.

#### Job Interview Assistance

##### Requirements

- A bona-fide job interview must be confirmed by submitting a completed employer letter confirming the interview has been arranged;
- Distance must be a minimum of fifty (50) miles from the residence:
- A maximum of three (3) days is allowed for an interview unless prior written approval is given to exceed this limit.

##### Payment (Job interview allowance will not exceed a total of \$1,000.00 per customer)

- a. A per diem reimbursement of up to \$100.00 (per day) can be provided for food, lodging and related expenses to a maximum of three (3) days. A maximum fee of \$25.00 a day will be allowed for meals (with receipts) and up to \$75.00 per day for lodging reimbursement (with receipts).
- b. Actual cost of transportation if provided by commercial transportation will be reimbursed with receipts. Automobile travel will be reimbursed at the rate of 17 cents per mile.
- c. Job Interview Assistance is a multiple occurrence policy not to exceed a maximum total of \$1,000.00.

### Relocation Assistance

#### Requirements

A bona-fide job offer and acceptance of the job must be confirmed;

#### Payment

- a. Upon prior written verification for all requirements, a maximum of \$3,000.00 per participant will be reimbursement with receipts.

#### Procedures

- a. Upon verification of job offer and acceptance; and completion of the Agreement of Understanding, the relocation allowance, not to exceed \$3,000.00, may be reimbursed.
- b. Transportation and toll receipts for actual cost of commercial carrier such as (air, train, bus, or rental) or for automobile travel must be submitted in person or by mail to the appropriate employment counselor to Supportive reimbursement of the relocation allowance.
- c. For each travel day of relocation a maximum fee of \$25.00/day will be allowed for meals (with receipts) and up to \$75.00/day for lodging reimbursement (with receipts).
- d. Relocation Assistance is a single occurrence policy.

### Rent Subsidy when Relocation Assistance is Required

#### Requirements

- a. A bona-fide job offer and acceptance of the job must be confirmed;
- b. The job must be a minimum fifty (50) miles from the residence;
- c. In writing, actual cost of rental.

#### Payment

- a. Rental subsidies limited to the first months rent only (no deposit or security deposit will be paid). This is included in the total cost allowed for relocation.

### **Needs-Related Payment Policy**

Needs-Related Payments are cash payments, which may be made to Adults and/or Dislocated Workers who are enrolled in WIA Title I Training. Decisions regarding payments will be based upon funding availability and eligibility criteria. (see Exhibit F)

Needs-Related Payments cannot be provided to customers for the time they are employed or enrolled in OJT, out-of-the area job search, or basic readjustment services.

Needs-Related payments are provided only in order to enable an adult or dislocated worker to participate in a full-time, approved training or education program that is part of a comprehensive retraining plan approved by and developed with the WIA Employment & Training Counselor.

Payments will cease upon completion, withdrawal or termination from approved training or education program.

Payments can be paid during the academic school year while the customer is in training and during scheduled college break within the regular academic year.

Requests for Needs-Related Payments during a summer school session may only be approved under the following conditions:

- (1) Courses must be pre-approved by the WIA counselor and...
- (2) Be part of the matriculated curriculum requirements for that degree or certificate program and...
- (3) Summer school course work must be taken with the purpose of shortening the overall length of time to complete the certificate of degree program.

Adult Eligibility. Adults must:

- a. Be unemployed,
- b. Not qualify for, or have ceased qualifying for, unemployment compensation.

Dislocated Worker Eligibility. Dislocated Workers must:

- a. Be unemployed, and
  - 1) Have ceased to qualify for unemployment compensation or trade readjustment allowance; and
  - 2) Be enrolled in a program of training by the 13<sup>th</sup> week after a determination of the worker's eligibility as a dislocated worker or, if later, by the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> week after the worker is informed that a short term layoff will exceed six (6) months; or
- b. Be unemployed and did not qualify for unemployment compensation or trade readjustment assistance.

The Local Board will establish payment levels for Adults by special resolution. Payment levels for Dislocated Workers will not exceed the greater of either of the following levels:

1. The weekly level of the unemployment compensation benefit; or
2. For participants who did not qualify for an unemployment compensation benefit, the weekly payment may not exceed the poverty level for an equivalent period. The weekly payment level must be adjusted to reflect changes in total family income as determined by the Local Board policies.