



To: Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership

From: Marie Trzupek Lynch, CEO and Ayom Siengo, VP of Community and Strategic Partnerships, Skills for Chicagoland's Future

Date: March 16, 2020

RE: Public Comment 2020

Thank you to the leadership of the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership ("the Partnership") for your efforts to update the strategies and tactics that drive the current local workforce system through the Local Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act 2020-2024 Four-Year Plan for Local Workforce Innovation Area 7. The transparency that the Partnership has demonstrated during the creation and response periods is vital for the Plan's success and offers individuals and organizations the opportunity to provide first-hand, data-supported results to help shape the final product.

Since 2012, Skills for Chicagoland's Future ("Skills") has been proud to serve as the Partnership's Business Intermediary. As a delegate agency and thanks to the Partnership, Skills has placed 1300 unemployed residents of Cook County into jobs, fulfilling our placement goals. An independent Business Intermediary amplifies impact by directly benefitting the unemployed and underemployed while also working with community based organizations and the business community by responding to demand for talent. We would like to take this opportunity to support this draft plan's foundational principal that a demand-driven, focused system is critical to drive long-term impact and comment on the vital role a business intermediary plays in this capacity for the local workforce system

State of Illinois WIOA Vision Statement

"Promote business-driven talent solutions that integrate education, workforce and economic development resources across systems to provide businesses, individuals, and communities with the opportunity to prosper and contribute to growing the state's economy."

- State of Illinois WIOA Unified State Plan Modification (July 1, 2016-June 30, 2020) pg. 40
-Illinois Local Workforce Innovation Area 7 2020 Local Plan Attachment A - MOU pg. 4

Response: The principle of promoting business-driven jobs-first talent solutions is important. A business intermediary uses labor market intelligence to educate and coach job seekers, helping them to become competitive candidates for actively hiring employers. Additionally, the scope of work of the business intermediary requires providing demand-driven services that reflect the ever-changing recruitment and on-boarding process. Operating at the intersection of community, the private sector, and government, we affirm the importance of the business-driven mandate along with the importance of the use of a



business intermediary. By providing the linkage between the employer's needs and then connecting these opportunities to the numerous nonprofit organizations in the workforce system that are leaders in training the unemployed, an independent business intermediary allows all organizations to focus on what they do best and not replicate services.

Strategies

Strategy 4 - Expand Service Integration: As part of the Partnership's ongoing efforts aimed at service integration, the four comprehensive American Job Centers have begun formal service integration planning intended to deepen alignment in 2020 and beyond. Staff at each comprehensive American Job Center engaged in an individual planning process to set initial goals for the next year. Initial goals include a commitment to cross training for front line staff from all titles of WIOA, increased center level coordination and communication, and a shared customer database.

-Illinois Local Workforce Innovation Area 7 2020 Local Plan pg. 9

B. Employer Services All WIOA Partners agree to make improving business service delivery a priority in terms of meeting the workforce needs of high demand industries. The Business Services Teams (BSTs) at the Chicago Cook One Stop Centers will be coordinated by the Partnership's Business Relations and Economic Development Unit, with the other WIOA Partners, in supporting the local and regional business communities' growth and stability by leveraging economic and workforce development strategies and resources. The goal for all One Stop WIOA Partners is to identify specific workforce needs and leverage public resources and services in order to meet those needs in a timely and effective manner. Available services and resources offered include but are not limited to: labor market information, hiring fairs, onsite recruitment, job candidate pre-screening, basic skills training, on-the-job training (OJT), customized training, fidelity bonding, tax incentives, and information on hiring people with disabilities.

C. Referral Services All Partners agree to use the referral process with customers, and an inter-agency referral process between the Partners and any other appropriate and qualified providers will be used. This referral system includes accountability between Partners that provides referral outcome information exchanges between the Partners. The use of technology to make referrals (example: Career Connect) and other technology links and services provided by the WIOA Partners will be to provide efficient, timely and effective referrals.

-Illinois Local Workforce Innovation Area 7 2020 Local Plan Attachment A - MOU pg. 24 - 25

Response: A workforce system that supports innovation and avoids redundancy allows each organization involved to focus on their mission and areas of strength, elevating not only their own work and success, but the entire system's ability to create impact more efficiently. A business intermediary, such as Skills, advances these service integration



efforts by aligning supply-side training programs with local talent demand. Referrals are critical and Skills has utilized a series of processes to coordinate with CBOs about job openings including a weekly hot jobs report, bi-weekly conference call updates to CBOs on jobs, along with deeper partnerships led by our Community and Strategic Partnerships team.

Finally, an example of integrated solutions to workforce issues that has also become promising is the “Zendesk” database for shared placements. With increased use of referral services and shared placements, Skills agrees that an intermediary can provide the vital intersect of multi-faceted relationships between the community organizations providing supportive services, potential employers, and the unemployed job seeker.

What existing service delivery strategies will be curtailed or eliminated based on minimal return on investment?

Based on evaluation, the Partnership will:

- *Explore alternative models for expanding service delivery, such as satellite service locations.*
- *Eliminate business engagement functions that yield minimal return on investment and/or duplicate functions fulfilled by AJCs and Delegate Agencies.*

-Illinois Local Workforce Innovation Area 7 2020 Local Plan pg. 65

Response: As the business intermediary since 2012, we would recommend that the Local Plan not eliminate business engagement functions. Rather, with the amount of unemployed in many neighborhoods in Cook County still in double digits, along with the culminating and growing impact of COVID-19 on our county, the need for business engagement functions is critical and could be expanded to serve as many employers and unemployed as possible. While Skills has had the opportunity to serve as the business intermediary, we can share the following high-level lifetime results of this grant since 2012:

1. Placed over 1300 people into jobs through the business intermediary grant
2. Developed hiring relationships with over 70 employers throughout the life of the grant; survey employers annually on satisfaction with positive results
3. Engaged more than 100 local CBOs throughout the life of the grant
4. Created relationships and processes to regularly communicate and partner with the CBO's on the over 100 weekly job positions secured by Skills through our commitment to hire process with employers



As an intermediary, Skills has also had positive, sustained impact on the following critical components of the Partnership's strategy:

1. Promoting business-driven, jobs-first talent solutions across the region
2. Advancing service integration, managing and maintaining relationships with employers to connect job-ready applicants to jobs
3. Engaging in greater coordination across the landscape of business and community partners serving the needs of both employers and job seekers
4. Specifically hiring a VP of Community and Strategic Partnerships to deepen the relationships with community-based organizations

We believe the business intermediary function is critically needed and compliments the work of agency Business Service Representatives, and the BRED unit as a whole. As long as unemployment exists in Cook County, it will be critical to have both the BRED unit and the business intermediary/intermediaries functioning and growing as the needs of employers is greater than any one organization or initiative. We would recommend that the Local Plan should include an opportunity to expand the impact of the business intermediary, rather than eliminate or reduce it.

Conclusion:

We applaud the efforts of the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership to create a new Local Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act 2020-2024 Four-Year Plan for Local Workforce Innovation Area 7. This plan must focus on demand-driven solutions directing a jobs-first approach, and the critical role an independent business intermediary plays in driving those focuses throughout the local workforce system. This plan must take into consideration the ever-changing needs of the business community, expand the role an independent business intermediary has to deepen relationships with the business community and bridge the gap between supply-side focuses and demand-driven needs, and provide tangible impact.