



REPORT

NOVEMBER 2015

Providing Public Workforce Services to Job Seekers: Implementation Findings on the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs

Social Policy Research Associates

Ronald D'Amico, Kate Dunham,
Verenice Chavoya-Perez, Deborah Kogan,
Melissa Mack, Marian Negoita, Anne Paprocki

Mathematica Policy Research

Sheena McConnell, Linda Rosenberg

Submitted to:

U.S. Department of Labor
Employment and Training Administration
Office of Policy Development and Research
200 Constitution Avenue, NW
Room N-5637
Washington, DC 20210
Contract Number: DOLJ081A20678

Submitted by:

Mathematica Policy Research
1100 1st Street, NE
12th Floor
Washington, DC 20002-4221
Telephone: (202) 484-9220
Facsimile: (202) 863-1763
Project Directors: Sheena McConnell and Linda Rosenberg
Reference Number: 06503.133

About the Evaluation Team

This evaluation is led by Mathematica Policy Research with the support of its evaluation team partners: Social Policy Research Associates, MDRC, and the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce.

MATHEMATICA
Policy Research



This project has been funded, either wholly or in part, with Federal funds from the Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration under Contract Number DOLJ081A20678. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of Labor, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement of same by the U.S. Government.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to acknowledge the many people who contributed in important ways to the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs Gold Standard Evaluation's implementation study and report.

We received valuable input and guidance throughout the project from Eileen Pederson, our project officer from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Employment and Training Administration (ETA). Others at DOL who provided important advice and support include Demetra Nightingale, Jonathan Simonetta, and Jean Grossman of DOL's Chief Evaluation Office, and Jane Oates, Gerri Fiala, Mike Jones, Heidi Casta, Adele Gagliardi, Wayne Gordon, and Dan Ryan of ETA.

The design of the implementation study and other aspects of the evaluation benefited from the input of the evaluation's peer review board. We thank the following board members for their valuable guidance: Burt Barnow, Gary Burtless, Scott Cheney, Virginia Hamilton, Richard Hobbie, Robert Moffitt, Peter Mueser, Demetra Nightingale, and Robert Rector.

We are enormously grateful to the administrators and staff of the 28 Local Workforce Investment Areas and more than 100 American Job Centers (AJCs) that we visited for the implementation study. These individuals helped us understand the nuances of their programs and were extraordinarily patient and giving of their time. We also thank the customers in these areas who participated in interviews with our field staff and allowed them to observe their activities within the AJCs. We appreciate the expertise of state workforce-agency officials, who explained state policies and priorities, and the states' data system personnel, who provided extracts of records from their management information systems.

We also thank the many members of the WIA Gold Standard Evaluation team. We thank the team of field researchers, led by Social Policy Research Associates (SPR), who collected detailed information about the implementation of the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. Field researchers from SPR included Hannah Betesh, Mika Clark, Kate Dunham, Christian Geckeler, Deanna Khemani, Deborah Kogan, Jill Leufgen, Michael Midling, Tyler Moazed, Marian Negoita, Laura Paulen, Anne Paprocki, Anna Rubin, Jeffrey Salzman, Dae Woo Son, Miloney Thakrar, Elizabeth Waiters, and Kristin Wolff. Mathematica field researchers were Katie Bodenlos, Stephanie Boraas, Andrew Clarkwest, Brittany English, Juliette Henke, Annalisa Matri, Anna Maria McCutcheon, Katie Mosher, Teri Schulte, and Jessica Ziegler. MDRC field researchers were Herb Collado, David Navarro, Keith Olejniczak, and Betsy Tessler. We also drew information for this report from the evaluation's cost study, led by Mathematica's Annalisa Matri. Mary Hancock of SPR and Dana Rotz and Paul Burkander of Mathematica conducted the analysis of the WIA Standardized Record Data (WIASRD) used in this report. In addition, Pamela Holcomb of Mathematica and Ed Strong of the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce reviewed an earlier version of this report, and their insightful comments helped us make important improvements. Katie Bodenlos expertly guided the report through the production process.

This page has been left blank for double-sided copying.

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	ix
ACRONYMS	xxi
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
About WIA	1
About WIOA	4
Overview of the WIA Gold Standard Evaluation	5
The local areas participating in the study	5
The impact study	7
The implementation study	8
Organization of this report.....	10
II. THE SERVICE DELIVERY CONTEXT	11
Geographic, political, and economic environments	11
Program funding.....	17
Number of customers served.....	19
American Job Center networks	20
Customer characteristics.....	21
III. CORE SERVICES.....	27
Role of WIA and ES in providing core services	27
Approaches to serving new AJC customers	29
Core service offerings	31
Greeter.....	31
Orientation to core services.....	31
Resource rooms	32
Core workshops.....	35
Other staff assistance available to core customers.....	37
IV. INTENSIVE SERVICES	39
Approach to offering intensive services	40
Customers offered intensive services	41
Intensive service offerings.....	44
Career and service receipt planning.....	44
Job search assistance	47

	Case management	48
	Skill-building activities.....	49
	Staffing intensive services.....	50
V	TRAINING SERVICES.....	53
	Emphasis on training services	54
	Eligibility for training	57
	Training types and funding mechanisms	60
	Occupational skills training funded through ITAs.....	61
	Restrictions on choice of training program	61
	Restrictions on the ITA award	63
	On-the-job training	64
	Other training types.....	66
	Exhausting training funds.....	68
VI	SUPPORTIVE AND FOLLOW-UP SERVICES	69
	Supportive services.....	69
	Types of supportive services	70
	Eligibility for supportive services.....	71
	Caps on supportive services available to customers	73
	Reduction in supportive services due to funding cuts	73
	Follow-up services	73
VII	CROSS-CUTTING FINDINGS AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS.....	75
	Cross-cutting findings.....	75
	Looking forward: implications for the workforce system under WIOA.....	76
	REFERENCES.....	79
	APPENDIX A WIA GOLD STANDARD EVALUATION IMPLEMENTATION ISSUE BRIEFS	83
	APPENDIX B OFFICIAL NAMES OF LOCAL AREAS PARTICIPATING IN THE STUDY	87

TABLES

I.1	Summary of site visit topics	9
II.1	Features of the study local areas	12
II.2	Characteristics of all customers, dislocated workers, and adults in the study.....	22
II.3	Select customer characteristics, by study local area	25
III.1	Different approaches to serving new AJC customers in the 28 study local areas.....	30
IV.1	Study local areas by their approach to offering customers intensive services	41
V.1	Types of WIA-authorized training.....	60
B.1	Official names of local areas participating in the study.....	89

FIGURES

1	National unemployment rate during the study period	xi
2	Trend in national funding for the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs, 2000-2014.....	xii
3	Staffing models used by the 28 study local areas	xiv
4	Percentage of full-WIA customers who received WIA-funded training by approach to offering intensive services and enhanced intake for all new AJC customers	xvii
I.1	Locations of the 28 local areas participating in the study	6
II.1	Geographic sizes of the 28 study local areas	13
II.2	Number of counties and local labor markets within the 28 study local areas	14
II.3	Percentage of population in urban areas in the 28 study local areas	15
II.4	National unemployment rate during the study period	16
II.5	Annual unemployment rates in the 28 study local areas in 2012	16
II.6	Funding for Adult and Dislocated Worker programs, by study local area.....	18
II.7	Trend in national funding for the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs, 2000-2014.....	18
II.8	Number of exiters in the 28 study local areas in calendar year 2012.....	19
II.9	Number of comprehensive and affiliate AJCs in the 28 study local areas in 2012.....	21
II.10	Number of study local areas by percentage of customers who were dislocated workers	24
III.1	Staffing models used by the 28 study local areas	28
III.2	Resource room staffing arrangements used in the 28 study local areas.....	35
III.3	Staff used to facilitate core workshops in the 28 study local areas	37

IV.1	Study local areas' approaches to identifying customers interested in WIA intensive services	42
V.1	Percentage of full-WIA group members who received WIA-funded training, by local area	55
V.2	Percentage of full-WIA customers who received WIA-funded training by approach to offering intensive services and enhanced intake for all new AJC customers	56
V.3	Types of training received by full-WIA group trainees (percentages)	61
V.4	Number of study local areas by percentage of trainees in the full-WIA group who received an OJT	62
V.5	Caps on ITA awards across the 28 study local areas	63
VI.1	Number of study local areas offering supportive services, by type	71

BOXES

I.1	Local areas participating in the WIA Gold Standard Evaluation	6
I.2	The WIA Gold Standard Evaluation's impact study	7
III.1	Providing new customers with a one-on-one orientation to core services	32
III.2	An example of job search support tools	33
III.3	An example of self-service career exploration and self-assessment offerings	34
III.4	An example of online skills instruction	34
IV.1	Determination of intensive-services eligibility in one study local area	44
IV.2	An example of the steps involved in developing an IEP	46
IV.3	Job search assistance offered in one study local area	48
IV.4	An example of an intensive-services job club	50
V.1	An example of a typical process to obtain an ITA	59
V.2	An example of a tiered ITA cap with higher ITA caps for high wage and STEM occupations	64
V.3	Federal requirements for OJT	66
V.4	Two examples of training provided to cohorts of workers	68
VI.1	Providing supportive services regardless of service tier	72
VI.2	Streamlining the approval process	72
VI.3	Setting caps for different types of supportive services	73
VI.4	Following up to identify customers' needs for assistance	74

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Program Year 2012 (July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013), the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) Adult and Dislocated Worker programs received nearly \$2 billion in funding to increase the employment and earnings of the nation's workforce. Together, they served about 8 million customers. In 2008, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Employment and Training Administration (ETA) funded the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs Gold Standard Evaluation (the WIA Gold Standard Evaluation) to estimate the impact and cost-effectiveness of the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and provide a detailed description of their operations. This report discusses the services offered by the two programs and the contexts in which they operated, highlighting service-delivery features that might have a direct bearing on customers' employment and other outcomes.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) superseded WIA in July 2015. Although WIOA makes some important changes to the public workforce investment system, the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs continue to exist and offer job seekers a similar set of services. Lessons learned from the WIA Gold Standard Evaluation about service-delivery practices can inform policymakers and program administrators as WIOA is implemented.

About the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs

WIA required that Local Workforce Investment Boards, each responsible for managing services within a Local Workforce Investment Area (local area), establish a coordinated delivery system comprised of American Job Centers (AJCs, also known as One-Stop Career Centers). The Wagner-Peyser Employment Service (ES) and other programs partner with WIA to provide services through the AJC system.

The WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs offered services in three tiers that provided progressively greater levels of assistance:

1. **Core.** These services consisted mainly of information and tools to assist customers plan their careers and find employment.
2. **Intensive.** These services generally required higher levels of staff assistance than staff-assisted core services.
3. **Training.** After receiving core and intensive services, some customers were eligible for training designed to prepare them for employment in occupations deemed to be in demand by employers in the local area. WIA required that the majority of training be funded through individual training accounts (ITAs), which were vouchers that customers could use to procure training from approved programs. On-the-job training, entrepreneurial training, adult basic education, and training customized for specific employers were also permissible.

The WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs each had their own eligibility rules:

- **Adults** were customers age 18 and older. In certain instances, public assistance recipients and other low-income individuals (as defined by WIA Section 101(25)) had priority for accessing intensive and training services.

-
- **Dislocated workers** were customers who (1) were terminated or laid off from a job, showed attachment to the workforce, and were unlikely to return to their previous occupation or industry; (2) were terminated or laid off as a result of a plant closure or substantial downsizing; (3) were self-employed and unemployed due to general economic conditions; or (4) were displaced homemakers.

About the evaluation

The WIA Gold Standard Evaluation's objectives are to develop nationally generalizable estimates of the impacts and cost-effectiveness of WIA intensive and training services on customers' employment and earnings, and examine how the programs were implemented nationwide. The study team recruited 28 randomly selected local areas in 19 states to participate in the study. The random selection of local areas means that the findings from the study can be attributed to the programs nationally, rather than to only the local areas that agreed to participate in the study.

Customers who requested and were eligible for intensive services were provided information about the study, asked to participate in the study, and, if they consented, were randomly assigned to one of the following groups:

- **Full-WIA group.** Customers in this group could receive any services for which they were eligible and determined to need, just as they would in the absence of the study.
- **Core-and-intensive group.** Customers in this group could receive any core or intensive services provided by the WIA Adult or Dislocated Worker program for which they were eligible and were determined to need. They could not receive WIA-funded training.
- **Core group.** Customers in this group could receive only core services and no intensive or training services funded by the WIA Adult or Dislocated Worker program.

Random assignment began in November 2011 and continued through April 2013. All customers eligible for intensive services during the study intake period were randomly assigned, with some exceptions including veterans, Trade Adjustment Assistance program participants, customers who employers sent to the AJC to access on-the-job training, and customers who were required to receive WIA services to receive unemployment insurance benefits. About 36,000 customers were randomly assigned.

The implementation study, the focus of this report, was conducted to describe the services that were offered to customers in each of the three study groups as well as the contexts in which the services were offered. Data for this study were collected through two rounds of multiday site visits to each of the 28 local areas. The first round of visits took place from March through November 2012 and the second round took place from March through May 2013. Across both rounds of visits, we visited 102 AJCs, or about 40 percent of all AJCs in these local areas. During the site visits, we interviewed local WIA administrators, AJC managers, WIA career counselors, resource room staff, business services staff, ES managers, finance staff, and staff responsible for the management information systems. We also interviewed customers, reviewed case files, and observed some services being provided. Telephone interviews were conducted

with local area administrators after the second round of site visits, between December 2013 and February 2014.

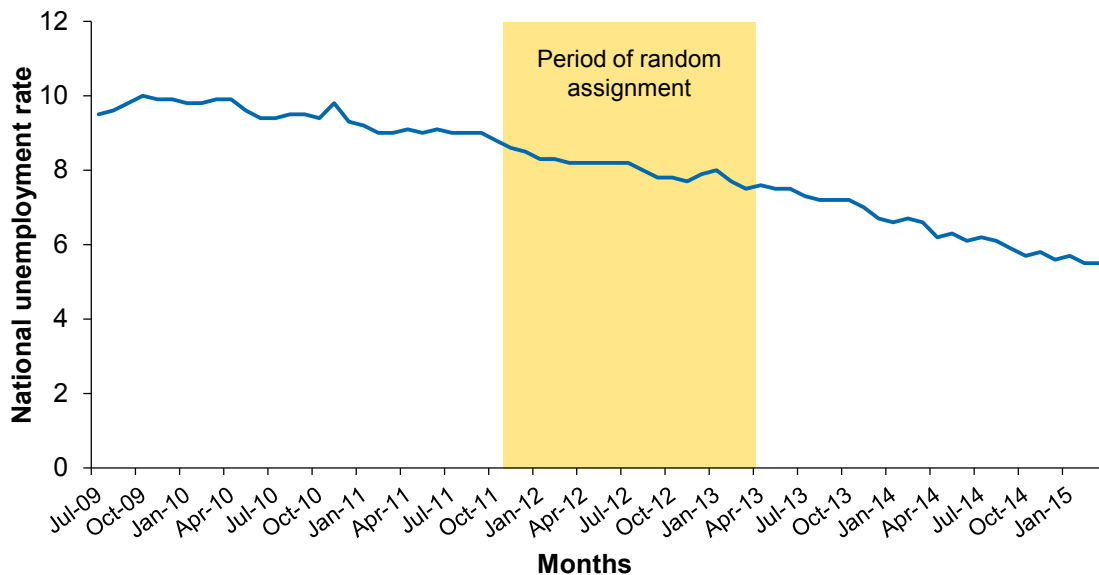
We also used service data on study participants drawn from the WIA participant-level database, the WIA Standardized Record Data (WIASRD). We asked the state or local area to provide the WIASRD for all study participants approximately 15 months after the last customer was randomly assigned.

The service-delivery context

The study local areas varied widely in size. Study local areas varied in physical size, the number of counties and labor markets they encompassed, and the size of their WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. The smallest study local area covered just over 100 square miles and comprised only part of one county and one labor market. In contrast, the largest study local area covered a whole state, more than 75,000 square miles, and 57 labor markets. Annual funding for the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs combined ranged among study local areas from about \$0.5 to \$36 million.

The study occurred at a time of high but falling unemployment. When the first customer was randomly assigned, the recession was officially over (as determined by the National Bureau of Economic Research), but the national unemployment rate was still just under 9 percent. The unemployment rate had fallen to just under 8 percent when the last customer was randomly assigned and continued to fall thereafter (Figure 1). The 2012 annual unemployment rate varied from just over 4 percent in one local area to about 15 percent in another.

Figure 1. National unemployment rate during the study period

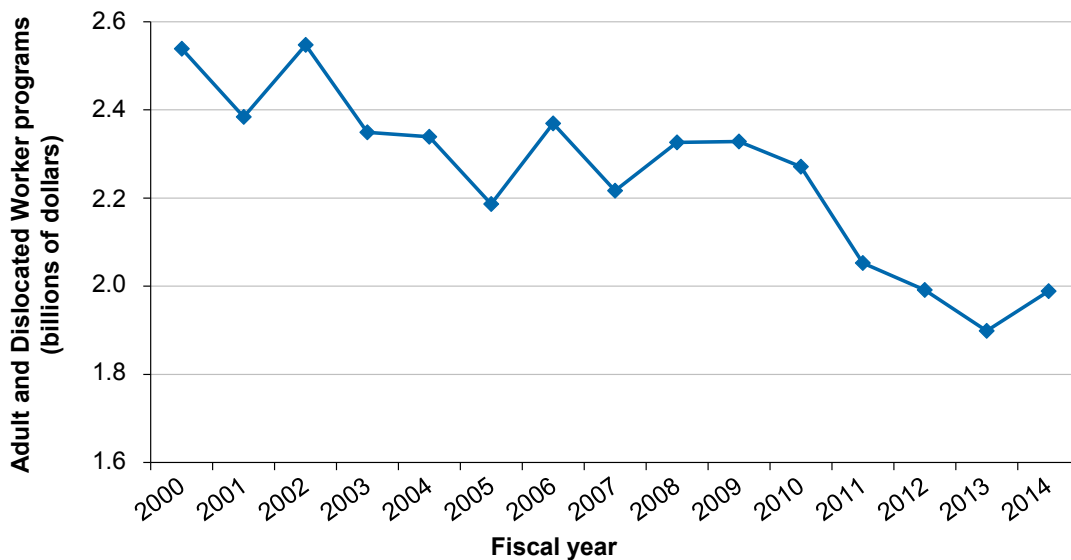


Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey*. Available at http://data.bls.gov/pdq/SurveyOutputServlet?request_action=wh&graph_name=LN_cpsbref3.

Note: The unemployment rate is seasonally adjusted.

At the same time, funding for the programs declined. Funding for the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs declined by more than 12 percent between 2010 and 2014 (Figure 2). In 2012, when most of the customers enrolled in the study, the combined Adult and Dislocated Worker program funding was just less than \$2 billion, the lowest in more than a decade.

Figure 2. Trend in national funding for the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs, 2000-2014



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, "Training and Employment Programs, Summary of Budget Authority, FY 1984 to 2012, by Year of Appropriation" (Washington, DC. 2014). Available at <http://www.doleta.gov/budget/bahist.cfm>.
 U.S. Department of Labor, "FY 2015 Department of Labor Budget in Brief" (Washington, DC. nd). Available at <https://www.dol.gov/dol/budget/2015/PDF/FY2015BIB.pdf>.

Notes: The data exclude special appropriations as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Study local areas differed in how they configured their AJC networks. The study local areas each operated from 1 to 30 AJCs, with an average of about 10. Of the 269 AJCs operated in the 28 study local areas, 151 met their states' definition of a comprehensive center. The states varied in how they defined a comprehensive center, but most required that both WIA and ES staff members be physically present at the center for it to be considered a comprehensive center. The remaining AJCs were affiliates that did not have on-site staff from at least one mandatory partner, or did not meet another state-based criterion for a comprehensive center. A few study local areas established affiliate centers to serve special populations, such as immigrants or the homeless. Other affiliate centers focused on certain sectors or industries. In addition, seven study local areas provided additional support via mobile vans, roving outreach teams, and unstaffed community access points.

The reduction in funding led study local areas to cut back on service offerings. About one-third of the study local areas had closed one or more AJCs between our visits in 2012 and subsequent follow-up telephone calls in late 2013 or early 2014. These closings resulted in an overall decline in the number of AJCs in the study local areas of nearly 12 percent. Funding cuts also led to some study local areas reducing AJC hours of operation and relocating AJCs to

facilities with lower rent costs. According to administrators at study local areas, funding cuts also led to fewer career counselors, fewer customers participating in WIA-funded training, and reductions in supportive services (such as assistance with transportation expenses).

The programs served customers with diverse characteristics and barriers to employment. Customers in the study varied in age from 18 to over 80. (Customers under age 18 were excluded from the study.) More than half (57 percent) were female. Just over 60 percent were racial and ethnic minorities. About 76 percent of customers had no post-secondary degree, and 7 percent had neither a high school diploma nor a General Educational Development (GED) certificate. Nearly all customers were unemployed when they were enrolled in the study. Nearly one-quarter of customers had not had a job in the five years before random assignment. Overall, 56 percent of study participants were considered adults, 35 percent were considered dislocated workers, and the rest were considered both. Although adults and dislocated workers were similar on some characteristics, on average, adults were younger, had less work experience, and were more disadvantaged than dislocated workers.

Adult and dislocated workers were offered services based on their needs not the funding source. All study local areas offered services to meet specific customers' needs irrespective of whether they were adults or dislocated workers. Because the average characteristics of adults differed from the average characteristics of dislocated workers, the services offered to an average Adult program customer differed from those offered to an average Dislocated Worker program customer. However, in all study local areas, a customer with the same characteristics would have been offered almost identical services irrespective of whether these services were funded by the Adult or Dislocated Worker program.

Core services

All study local areas provided a similar menu of core services. Core services were typically funded by multiple programs including WIA and ES. The services included:

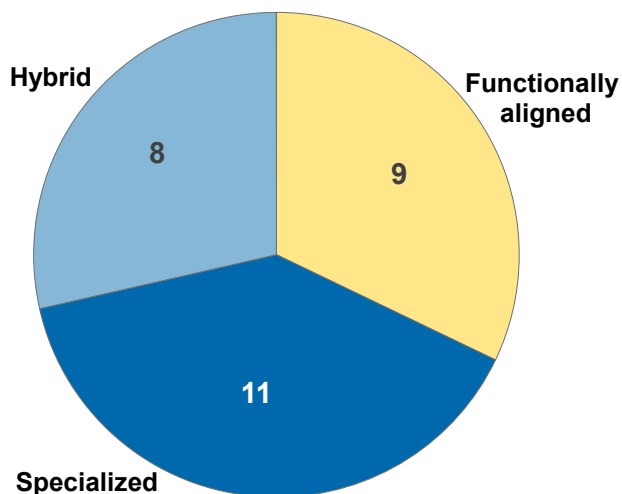
- **Meeting with a greeter.** An AJC staff member met all new customers as they arrived at an AJC. In most study local areas, the greeters registered them as new AJC customers and provided them with information about available services.
- **Orientation to core services.** Most study local areas offered customers either a group or a one-on-one orientation to the core and other services available at the AJC.
- **Access to resource rooms.** In most study local areas, AJCs typically contained one resource room that served both WIA and ES customers. The resource rooms nearly always contained computers, information about available community services, job matching systems, labor market information, job search tools, and career exploration tools. Some resource rooms contained online skills instruction and basic skills assessments. Limited staff assistance was provided to customers using the rooms.
- **Workshops.** Twenty-six of the 28 study local areas offered one or more core workshops in at least some AJCs. These workshops were open to all customers and covered topics related to job searches as well as skill development, such as how to use some computer programs. Job clubs, in which job seekers met regularly with peers to share job search strategies, were also available in many study local areas.

- **Intake assessments.** As discussed further below, some local areas provided an intake assessment to all new AJC customers to determine which services they should be offered.

Study local areas used three staffing models to deliver core services. The models (Figure 3) employed the following designs:

1. **The functionally-aligned model.** In this model, WIA and ES staff members were functionally interchangeable in the provision of core services, such as providing AJC orientations and staffing resource rooms. Customers could expect to receive equivalent services whether or not a WIA or ES staff member served them.
2. **The specialized model.** In this model, staff from each program had specific, non-overlapping responsibilities for core services. They specialized by (1) service, such as ES staff providing all core services, while WIA staff focused on intensive services; (2) population, such as ES staff providing core services to unemployment insurance recipients and WIA staff providing core services to other customers; and (3) location, such as WIA and ES providing core services but in different AJCs.
3. **The hybrid model.** In this model, ES and WIA used a functionally-aligned staffing model to provide one or two core services but a specialized staffing model in providing others.

Figure 3. Staffing models used by the 28 study local areas



Source: WIA Gold Standard Evaluation qualitative data collection, 2012–2013.

Study local areas implemented one of three general approaches to serving new AJC customers. Eighteen study local areas offered a customer-initiated approach, in which new AJC customers were directed first to use the resource room, typically after receiving an orientation to AJC services. These customers were offered additional staff assistance if they were unsuccessful in independently searching for a job. However, to address a concern that some new customers may not have the skills to conduct an effective job search independently, staff in eight study local areas instead conducted an enhanced intake on all new customers when they first visited the AJC. This enhanced intake involved an initial assessment of the customers’ needs. Customers deemed capable of finding a job without more staff assistance were directed to use the resource

room, while other customers were directed to more intensive staff assistance (as either a staff-assisted core or intensive service). In the remaining two study local areas, the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs almost exclusively served customers interested in training; new AJC customers interested in job search were directed to resource rooms overseen by ES staff, and new customers interested in training met with a WIA career counselor to determine training eligibility.

Intensive services

Customer motivation was a key criterion for determining eligibility for intensive services. WIA gave local areas considerable flexibility to determine which customers were eligible for intensive services. Most study local areas considered customers ineligible for intensive services if they had one or more serious challenges to successfully obtaining a job (such as a substance abuse problem or lack of a high school diploma or GED certificate). Administrators and staff in many study local areas reported that a key criterion for determining eligibility for intensive services was customers' motivation to find a job (either with or without training). One approach to determining customer motivation was to observe whether they completed a set of activities—such as resume improvement, job search, or workshop attendance—required before they were deemed eligible for intensive services. Customers who did not complete these activities were viewed as insufficiently motivated to obtain employment and were not offered WIA-funded intensive services, but could continue to receive core services.

Individualized assistance by a career counselor was the key feature of intensive services. Intensive services involved career counselors working with customers in the following areas:

- **Career and service-receipt planning.** This service included offering basic skills tests (such as the Test of Adult Basic Education [TABE] and WorkKeys) and aptitude and interest tests (such as CareerScope). Career counselors also administered in-person comprehensive assessments of customers' goals and needs. Based on the findings from the tests and assessments, career counselors developed an individual employment plan (IEP) for each customer that documented the customer's career and training goals, the agreed-upon strategies to meet the goals, and the services needed for success. For customers interested in training, career counselors would determine training eligibility, assist customers in finding alternative funding sources, and assist customers in selecting an occupation and training program.
- **Job search assistance.** Career counselors assisted customers' job search by reviewing resumes, assisting customers using the job banks and other job search engines, and providing interviewing advice. Business services staff in some study local areas offered job leads.
- **Case management.** Career counselors attempted to meet with customers regularly to provide support and monitor progress with their job searches or training participation. Career counselors referred customers who needed assistance with utility bills, housing, food, clothing, or physical or mental health care to other services in the community.

Sixteen of the 28 study local areas offered workshops that were viewed as intensive services and, unlike core workshops, were offered only to customers eligible for intensive services. Only five study local areas offered work experience, internships, or prevocational training funded by WIA.

Some local areas focused their WIA intensive services on customers interested in or participating in training. Ten of the 28 study local areas offered WIA intensive services primarily to customers interested or participating in training. Career counselors in these local areas spent much less time than in the other local areas providing job search assistance to customers not interested in pursuing training. Some customers not interested in pursuing training could receive intensive services from other AJC partners, such as Veterans' Employment and Training Services or Vocational Rehabilitation. The remaining 18 study local areas offered intensive services both to customers who needed assistance looking for a job but were not interested in or eligible for training and those who were interested in or participating in training services.

Distinctions between core and intensive services were not always clear. The study local areas differed in which services they defined as "intensive" and which they defined as "core." For example, some study local areas offered workshops as an intensive service, whereas others treated similar workshops as a core service. Some staff assistance was provided as a core service if it took place in the resource room or as part of the enhanced intake, while the staff assistance provided by career counselors was generally considered an intensive service. We used a more standardized definition to categorize services as core or intensive consistently across study local areas for the evaluation, but even so, some services (such as assessments) were considered core services in some study local areas and intensive services in others.

Training services

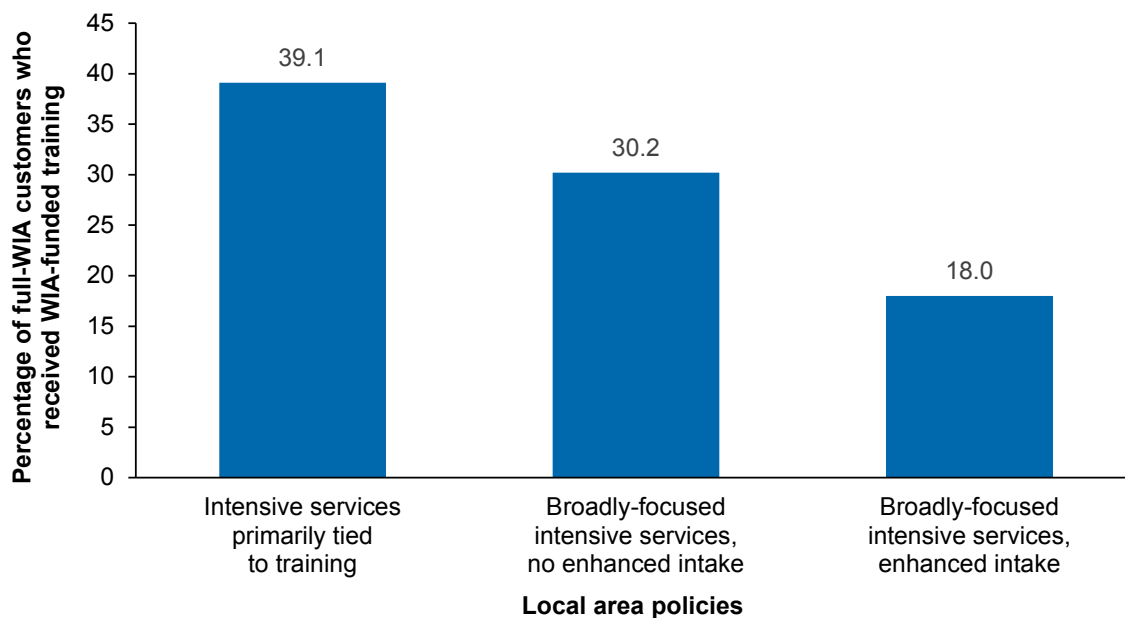
The vast majority of training was funded by ITAs. Ninety-five percent of all trainees in the study's full-WIA group received occupational skills training, mostly funded through an ITA. Less than 5 percent of the customers in the full-WIA group participated in on-the-job training. Although permitted by WIA, few customers received funding for adult basic education, entrepreneurial training, training customized for a specific employer, or training provided to cohorts of customers through contracts with providers.

The proportion of customers who received training varied significantly across study local areas. Not all members of the full-WIA group were interested in training, some were ineligible because of their characteristics (such as lack of education), and some did not complete all the activities required for approval. Overall, we estimate that just less than one-third of all customers found eligible for intensive services and randomly assigned to the full-WIA group participated in WIA-funded training within about 15 months after random assignment. The training rate across the study local areas ranged from 3 percent in one study local area to 86 percent in another. This variation was primarily the result of state or local policies that affected the degree to which the local areas emphasized providing training services versus assisting customers in finding employment without training. Another factor was the availability of funding. As their funding for the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs declined,

administrators in many study local areas reported reducing the number of customers receiving training services or the amount paid for each trainee.

The training rate was lowest in study local areas that offered an enhanced intake and broadly targeted WIA intensive services. Across the study local areas that targeted intensive services to customers who were not interested in training as well as those who were, and provided an enhanced intake to all new AJC customers, the average training rate was 18 percent (Figure 4). In contrast, the average training rate in study local areas that offered intensive services primarily to those customers interested in training was more than twice that rate (39 percent).

Figure 4. Percentage of full-WIA customers who received WIA-funded training by approach to offering intensive services and enhanced intake for all new AJC customers



Source: WIASRD data extracted between January 2014 and November 2014.

Note: These estimates are the weighted percentage of customers assigned to the full-WIA group who received training according to WIASRD extracts obtained for the study.

The training approval process was extensive in most study local areas. The requirements to receive training funds involved customers conducting research on multiple occupations and training programs. Some study local areas even required that customers visit multiple training programs. The rationale given for this approach was that customers who completed an extensive training approval process were expected to make better training choices and be more likely to complete their training program, resulting in employment outcomes that would help the local area meet its performance goals.

Restrictions on training choices varied by local area. All local areas capped the amount of their ITAs, although the maximum cap varied from \$2,000 to \$12,000 per customer. About one-third of study local areas also established lower caps for a subset of their training programs.

For example, some local areas established lower caps for training in fields that they believed did not lead to high-wage jobs. Some study local areas restricted the training programs that were approved for ITA-holders to those in particularly high-growth occupations or those that led to a credential.

Supportive and follow-up services

Neither supportive nor follow-up services was a major component of either the WIA Adult or Dislocated Worker program. Most study local areas made small amounts of funds available to help customers overcome barriers to participating in training or other services. The most common form of support was assistance with training and work expenses, such as books, supplies, tools, and uniforms. More than half the study local areas also paid for transportation expenses that some customers incurred while attending training or conducting job search. Other study local areas relied on other programs in the community to provide this support. Follow-up services were mainly short contacts with customers—by email or telephone—designed to collect information on employment required for performance measurement.

Looking forward: implications for the workforce system under WIOA

Although WIOA makes major changes to the public workforce system, the findings from the WIA Gold Standard Evaluation can guide policymakers and program administrators going forward. WIOA leaves intact important elements of the service-delivery structure of the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs: services will continue to be accessed at AJCs, the same basic set of services will be offered, and customers will continue to choose the training they view as most appropriate, with some restrictions.

Findings from the study suggest that many of the changes made by WIOA add flexibility for local areas to continue in directions they were already heading. For example:

- **Blending core and intensive services.** WIOA eliminates core and intensive services, replacing them with “career services.” We found that the distinction between core and intensive services was often not clear across study local areas.
- **Eliminating the sequence of services.** WIOA removes the requirement that customers receive core and intensive services (now career services) prior to receiving training services. Many study local areas, and especially those that focused on providing services to customers interested in training, moved customers through core and intensive services quickly. For example, some study local areas counted the interactions with the AJC greeter and determination of training eligibility as the core and intensive services required for training eligibility.
- **Emphasizing credentials.** WIOA emphasizes the importance of customers obtaining employer-recognized credentials. It adds a performance measure to account for customers who achieve a credential or make progress toward a credential. However, even under WIA, some study local areas were either making training approval contingent on the possibility of attaining a credential or providing a higher ITA for programs that led to credentials.
- **Collocating ES and WIA programs.** WIOA requires Adult and Dislocated Worker program and ES staff to be colocated at AJCs. All but one of the 19 states with local areas

participating in the study required that these program staff be physically located at comprehensive centers, at least part time. In most study local areas, the same resource room served both ES and WIA customers.

WIOA also responds to barriers that study local areas were facing in offering work-based training. For example, staff in the study local areas noted that one reason the local areas did not fund more customer placements in on-the-job and customized training was that it was difficult to obtain businesses' participation. WIOA allows local areas to fund employer-specific training for employed workers (incumbent training) and authorizes wage reimbursements for on-the-job trainings of up to 75 percent of the customers' wages, up from 50 percent under WIA. WIOA also allows local formula funds to be spent on transitional jobs, another type of work-based training. These changes might lead to more opportunities for customers to participate in work-based training.

This report provides a snapshot of how the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs were implemented nationwide in the early 2010s. Although the public workforce system will undergo major changes under WIOA, the basic infrastructure and services will remain intact. A forthcoming report will describe the effectiveness of the services provided under these two programs and examine how the local areas' varying contexts and approaches described in this report may have affected their customers' employment outcomes.

This page has been left blank for double-sided copying.

ACRONYMS

AJC = American Job Center

CAPS = Career Ability Placement Survey

CASAS = Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems

COPS = Career Occupational Preference System

DOL = U.S. Department of Labor

ES = Employment Service established by the 1933 Wagner-Peyser Act

ESL = English as a second language

ETA = Employment and Training Administration

ETPL = Eligible training provider list

EUC08 = Emergency Unemployment Compensation Act of 2008

GA = General Assistance

GED = General Educational Development

IEP = Individual employment plan

ITA = Individual training account

LWIB = Local Workforce Investment Board

NEG = National Emergency Grants

OJT = On-the-job training

O*NET = Occupational Information Network

PY = Program Year

SAGE = System for Assessment and Group Evaluation

SCSEP = Senior Community Service Employment Program

SNAP = Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

SSDI = Social Security Disability Insurance Program

SSI = Supplemental Security Income

STEM = Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics

TAA = Trade Adjustment Assistance

TABE = Test of Adult Basic Education

TANF = Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

UI = Unemployment Insurance

WIA = Workforce Investment Act of 1998

WIASRD = Workforce Investment Act Standardized Record Data

WIC = Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children

WIOA = Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014

I. INTRODUCTION

In Program Year (PY) 2012 (July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013), the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) Adult and Dislocated Worker programs received nearly \$2 billion in funding and served about 8 million customers (U.S. Department of Labor 2015b). The WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs Gold Standard Evaluation (WIA Gold Standard Evaluation), launched in 2008, was designed to estimate the impact and cost-effectiveness of the WIA formula-funded Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and provide a detailed description of their operations. Reflecting these multiple goals, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Employment and Training Administration (ETA) funded the evaluation and its three interconnected components: impact, cost-benefit, and implementation studies.

This report, one in a series of reports from the study, provides findings from the implementation study. To inform the interpretation of the findings from the impact study, it focuses on describing the services available to study participants, particularly highlighting service delivery features that might have a direct bearing on the customers' employment, earnings, and other outcomes. A series of issue briefs (listed in Appendix A) discusses other topics examined as part of the implementation study, such as the governance of WIA programs, program partnerships, performance measurement, and sector initiatives.

With the signing into law of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) in July 2014, the WIA Gold Standard Evaluation takes on added significance. WIOA superseded WIA and made some important changes to the public workforce investment system. Certain WIOA provisions took effect on July 1, 2015, while others take effect a year later. Under WIOA, the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs will continue to exist and offer job seekers a similar set of services as under WIA. Therefore, lessons learned from the WIA Gold Standard Evaluation about service delivery practices in state-designated Local Workforce Investment Areas (local areas) can inform policymakers and program administrators as WIOA is implemented.

This chapter presents an overview of the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs, discusses WIOA and its provisions that are likely to affect the programs, and summarizes the design of the WIA Gold Standard Evaluation. The chapter concludes by presenting a road map to the report's subsequent chapters.

About WIA

WIA was enacted in 1998 (U.S. Congress 1998) in response to concern that the public workforce investment system, made up of more than 150 separately-funded programs, was severely fragmented and lacked effective coordination or collaboration. This fragmentation resulted in redundancies, inefficiencies, and a confusing maze of programs difficult for customers to navigate (U.S. Government Accountability Office 1994).

Congress enacted WIA to minimize this fragmentation and make the public workforce system customer-focused and demand-driven—able to help job seekers find and prepare for high-quality jobs and employers recruit productive workers. WIA was based on six key underlying principles:

-
1. **Streamlining service delivery through program integration.** To eliminate service fragmentation, WIA mandated the establishment of a coordinated service delivery system composed of American Job Centers (AJCs, also called One-Stop Career Centers). WIA designated more than a dozen separately funded programs as mandatory partners in the AJC system. Partners included the WIA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs; Job Corps; Wagner-Peyser Employment Service (ES); Veterans' Employment and Training Services; Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA); Unemployment Insurance (UI); Vocational Rehabilitation; adult education and literacy activities authorized by Title II of WIA; postsecondary vocational education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act; and others.¹
 2. **Providing universal access to basic services.** WIA gave every adult access to basic services provided through the AJC system. These core services included resources that customers might use with minimal to no staff assistance to find and apply for jobs, plan careers, and develop resumes, among other things.
 3. **Empowering individuals through a customer-focused approach to services.** WIA encouraged customers to take charge of their own career planning by first accessing the self-directed core services available through the AJC system. Further, customers who were approved for training could do so using individual training accounts (ITAs), which operate like vouchers that customers use to access training programs from approved providers.
 4. **Promoting state and local flexibility.** Operating on the premise that states and local areas know best what service designs and delivery strategies are optimal for their communities, WIA devolved decision-making authority away from the federal level. State governors designated local areas and oversaw the work of the local areas' Local Workforce Investment Boards (LWIBs). Each LWIB was responsible for designing its local area's service system. It also had the discretion to determine the local AJCs' emphasis on various services (for example, training versus core services), the contracted service providers, the location of AJCs, and the customers targeted for services. Each of ETA's six regional offices oversaw the implementation of the WIA programs in a specific set of states.
 5. **Promoting system accountability.** While devolving authority downward, WIA enhanced the focus on accountability and continuous improvement. It achieved this objective by mandating that local areas meet minimum standards on performance measures relating to customers' success in obtaining and retaining employment. Additionally, it required training providers to meet performance criteria to be eligible to serve ITA holders.
 6. **Engaging employers as an important AJC customer.** WIA emphasized the importance of meeting the needs of employers as well as job seekers. Accordingly, the legislation required businesses to have majority representation on each state workforce board and LWIB. Further, AJC systems were required to offer services to businesses and to provide job seekers with funding to train only for jobs deemed to be in high demand by employers.

¹ For a complete list of required AJC partners, see WIA section 121(b)(1)(B).

Depending on their needs and eligibility, WIA adult and dislocated worker customers were offered services through three tiers:

1. **Core.** These services consisted of conducting intake, determining eligibility, providing an initial assessment of customers' skills levels, and making available an array of resources and tools designed to help customers plan their careers and find employment. Core services were (1) self-directed and informational services that customers accessed on their own from either resource rooms available in AJCs or via the Internet, and (2) staff-assisted, which required a modest amount of staff assistance. Most core services were provided in resource rooms at the AJCs.
2. **Intensive.** These services generally required higher levels of staff assistance than staff-assisted core services. They included comprehensive and specialized assessments, job search assistance, career and service plan development, one-on-one career counseling and case management, placement in work experience positions, and short-term prevocational training.
3. **Training.** Training was predominantly funded through ITAs, which customers used to procure training in an "in-demand" occupation from an eligible training provider. In addition, training could be work-based: on-the-job training (OJT) or customized training. OJT is training that customers receive from their employer while employed; customized training is training customized for a specific employer and provided to current or prospective employees. In addition, under certain circumstances, local areas could procure training for groups of customers.

WIA required that local areas provide these services sequentially. They could offer intensive services only to customers who had received at least one core service and could offer training only to customers who had received at least one intensive service. Local areas could also provide customers with supportive services (such as transportation assistance) to help them succeed in job search and training activities. Chapters III through VI provide details of the core, intensive, training, and supportive services offered in the study local areas.

The WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs offered almost identical services, but each program had its own eligibility rules.

- **Adult program** services were available to customers age 18 and older, but, when funds were limited, as determined locally, public assistance recipients and other low-income customers (as defined by WIA Section 101(25)) had priority for accessing intensive and training services.
- **Dislocated Worker program** services were available to customers who: (1) were terminated or laid off from a job, showed attachment to the workforce, and were unlikely to return to their previous occupation or industry; (2) were terminated or laid off as a result of a plant closure or substantial plant downsizing; (3) were self-employed and experiencing unemployment as a result of general economic conditions; or (4) were displaced homemakers.

About WIOA

WIOA represents the first significant reform of the public workforce system since WIA's enactment in 1998 (U.S. Congress 2014). It leaves in place most of WIA's key principles, retains the general structure of the AJC system, and continues the authorization of the services provided by the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. However, it makes some important changes designed to better align system goals and streamline service delivery. The changes specific to the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs include:

- **Merging core and intensive services.** WIOA replaces core and intensive services with “career services.” Local areas can continue to offer the core and intensive services they offered under WIA as career services.
- **Eliminating the requirement that customers access service tiers sequentially.** WIOA explicitly states that customers are not required to receive core and intensive services before being offered training services.
- **Promoting improved workforce system partnerships.** WIOA requires that states and workforce system partners in each local area develop unified strategic plans and report on common measures of performance. It also requires the collocation of the ES and WIA programs and adds Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) as a mandatory AJC system partner, but allows governors to opt out of this requirement with DOL approval.
- **Aligning workforce and economic development goals.** The legislation requires local areas within an economic region to coordinate with each other, and emphasizes sector-based strategies to promote employment in high-demand industries and occupations.
- **Promoting work-based training.** WIOA relaxes restrictions on the use of incumbent worker training and increases the maximum allowable reimbursements to employers for OJT and customized training. It also authorizes transitional job placements.
- **Increasing the flexibility to transfer funds between the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs.** Under WIA, local areas' ability to transfer funds between the two programs fluctuated based on state-obtained waivers. WIOA allows the transfer of 100 percent of funds between the two programs without a waiver.
- **Enhancing the performance accountability system.** WIOA adds new performance measures to promote accountability within the public workforce system. In addition to the employment-related measures under WIA, WIOA requires local areas to measure customers' credential attainment and skills gain and employers' engagement in the system.

WIOA has a phased implementation with major programmatic changes taking effect on July 1, 2015, and accountability changes taking effect on July 1, 2016. Despite these changes, much of what we learn from studying the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs under WIA continues to apply to the programs as they are implemented under WIOA.

Overview of the WIA Gold Standard Evaluation

The WIA Gold Standard Evaluation’s objectives are to estimate the impacts of intensive and training services on adults’ and dislocated workers’ employment and earnings and examine how the programs were implemented nationwide. The evaluation does not examine the effectiveness of core services. Specifically, the evaluation addresses three main research questions:

1. Did access to services in the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs lead to better employment-related outcomes (such as increased likelihood of employment, higher earnings, and reduced use of public assistance)?
 - Did access to core and intensive services lead to better outcomes than access to core services only?
 - Did access to core, intensive, and training services lead to better outcomes than access to core and intensive services only?
 - Did access to core, intensive, and training services lead to better outcomes than access to core services only?
 - Did the effectiveness of the programs vary by the characteristics of the customers or how the programs were implemented?
2. Did the benefits from WIA intensive and training services exceed their costs?
3. How were the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs implemented?

To answer these research questions, the study design included three mutually reinforcing components: an impact study that focused on the first research question, a cost-benefit study that focused on the second question, and an implementation study that focused on the third question. This report focuses on the implementation study.

The WIA Gold Standard Evaluation focuses on the services offered by the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs using the formula funds provided to local areas and not any funds held in reserve at the national or state levels. Hence, it does not include specific federal grants, such as the National Emergency Grants (NEGs), or state funds used for rapid response activities, which are activities that address the needs of workers resulting from specific plant or company closings.

The local areas participating in the study

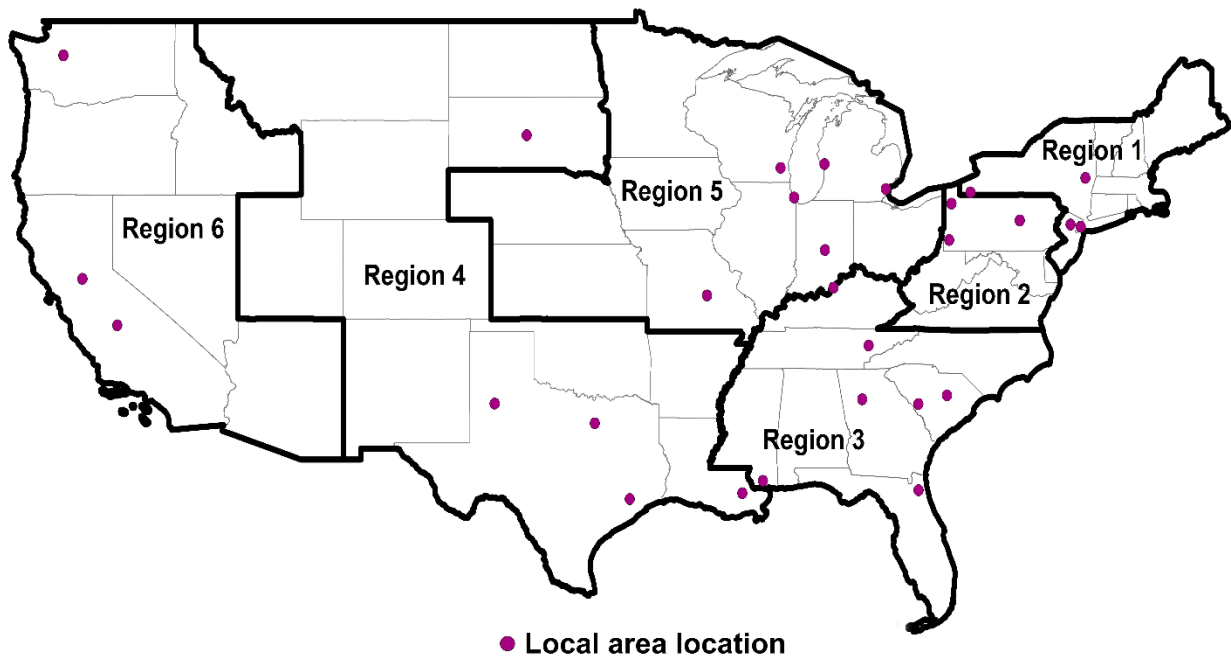
The local areas that participated in the study were selected randomly. This random selection was key to ensuring that the impact estimates derived from the study can be attributed to the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs nationally rather than to only the local areas that agreed to participate in the study. The alternative—including in the study local areas that volunteered to participate—might yield misleading findings if the volunteer local areas were particularly effective or ineffective. Thirty local areas were randomly selected from among the 487 local areas on the U.S. mainland that served more than 100 customers annually with intensive services. We successfully recruited 26 of these 30 randomly selected local areas and two additional randomly selected replacement local areas. Box I.1 lists the 28 local areas participating in the study, and Figure I.1 shows their locations.

Box I.1. Local areas participating in the WIA Gold Standard Evaluation

- Atlanta Region (Georgia)
- Capital Region (New York)
- Central Pennsylvania
- Central Region (Missouri)
- Chautauqua County (New York)
- Chicago (Illinois)
- East Tennessee
- Essex County (New Jersey)
- First Coast (Florida)
- Fresno County (California)
- Gulf Coast (Texas)
- Indianapolis (Indiana)
- Louisville (Kentucky)
- Lower Savannah (South Carolina)
- Muskegon (Michigan)
- New Orleans (Louisiana)
- New York City
- North Central Texas
- Northwest Pennsylvania
- Sacramento (California)
- Santee-Lynches (South Carolina)
- Seattle-King County (Washington)
- South Dakota
- South Plains (Texas)
- Southeast Michigan
- Southwest Corner Pennsylvania
- Twin Districts (Mississippi)
- Waukesha-Ozaukee-Washington Counties (Wisconsin)

Note: Appendix B lists the official names of the selected local areas.

Figure I.1. Locations of the 28 local areas participating in the study



Source: WIA Gold Standard Evaluation.

The impact study

An important objective of the implementation study is to aid in the interpretation of the impact study's findings. The impact study design called for estimating the impact of Adult and Dislocated Worker programs' intensive services relative to core services alone, of training services relative to both core and intensive services, and of training and intensive services together relative to core services alone. To provide unbiased estimates of these impacts, customers who were found eligible for intensive services were provided information about the study; if they consented to participate in the study, they were randomly assigned to one of three groups:

1. **Full-WIA group.** Customers in this group could receive any services for which they were eligible and determined to need, just as they would in the absence of the study.
2. **Core-and-intensive group.** Customers in this group could receive any core or intensive services provided by the WIA Adult or Dislocated Worker program for which they were eligible and were determined to need. They could not receive WIA-funded training.
3. **Core group.** Customers in this group could receive only core services and no intensive or training services funded by the WIA Adult or Dislocated Worker program.

Customers remained in their study group for 15 months after the date of their random assignment. Random assignment began in November 2011 and continued through April 2013, but each local area conducted random assignment for different periods during this interval. Box I.2 contains additional information about the impact study; detailed information is available in Mastri et al. (2015).

Box I.2. The WIA Gold Standard Evaluation's impact study

Across the study local areas, 35,665 customers enrolled in the study and were randomly assigned to one of the study groups. Most customers were assigned to the full-WIA group (88 percent). Equal percentages (6 percent) were assigned to each of the core-and-intensive and core groups. Some populations, such as veterans and TAA recipients, were excluded from the study and received WIA services as they would have in the absence from the study.

The study team is obtaining information on study participants from three major sources:

1. **Study registration form.** After consenting to participate in the study, customers completed a form that gathered information on their demographic and other background characteristics.
2. **Administrative data.** The study team will collect administrative data on study participants from two sources: (1) the Workforce Investment Act Standardized Record Data (WIASRD) will provide data on service receipt, and (2) the National Directory of New Hires will provide data on earnings, new hires, and UI benefit receipt.
3. **Surveys.** The study team conducted follow-up telephone surveys to a subset of study participants about 15 months after each was randomly assigned and plans to conduct another survey with the same participants about 30 months after each was randomly assigned.

In addition, cost data collected from the local areas will be used in the cost-benefit analysis. Mastri et al. (2015) contains further details of the design and implementation of the impact study.

The implementation study

The implementation study plays a central role in supporting the overall goals of the evaluation. Not only does it document the operations of the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs nationwide, it also sheds light on the nature of the services that were available to customers in each of the three impact study groups. Furthermore, identifying variation in service designs and delivery strategies across the 28 study local areas may help explain why impacts may be greater for customers served by some subsets of local areas than others. To understand local areas' implementation of the programs, the implementation study was structured to answer four questions:

1. What was the nature of the core, intensive, and training services offered to customers?
2. What customer groups were targeted for each type of service?
3. What was the context in which these services were provided during the study?
4. How did the implementation of the programs vary by local area?

Qualitative data about WIA program operations were collected through two rounds of multiday visits to each of the 28 local areas and follow-up telephone conversations. These data were supplemented by quantitative data on study participants and their services drawn from the WIA participant-level database, the Workforce Investment Act Standardized Record Data (WIASRD), and the study registration form that all customers in the study completed prior to random assignment.

Site visits. Through two rounds of site visits to each local area, the study team collected comprehensive information about local areas' implementation of their WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. Site visits, which generally lasted three to four days in the first round and two to three days in the second round, covered three broad topics: (1) local governance and AJC operations, (2) services, and (3) performance and reporting (Table I.1). Generally, the site visit interviews focused on the provision of AJC services to customers in the study, with a focus on those services funded by WIA and ES. The study did not focus on services funded by other AJC partners, such as the TAA, Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Jobs for Veterans State Grant program. Rosenberg et al. (2015) discusses the provision of services to veterans in the study local areas.

The first round of site visits took place from March through November 2012, generally two to six months after random assignment began, and the second round took place from March through May 2013, generally two to five months after random assignment concluded. Thus, we have a comprehensive picture of the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs during the critical period when study participants were receiving these programs' services.

Table I.1. Summary of site visit topics

Local governance and AJC operations

Role of local elected officials

Composition and priorities of the LWIB

AJC partnerships and staffing

AJC system structure, including types and numbers of AJCs and AJC management

Funding for AJCs and WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs

Services

Core services, including intake and orientation, resource room activity, workshops, and staff-assisted core services

Intensive services, including types of services and staffing for them

Training services, including use of ITAs, OJT, customized training, and entrepreneurial training

Supportive services, including child care, transportation, and other services

Business services

Performance and reporting

Management information systems

Role of performance standards

Source: WIA Gold Standard Evaluation.

Note: This report focuses on the bolded topics. A series of issue briefs examines other topics (see Appendix A).

Across both rounds of site visits, we visited approximately 102 AJCs, which represent about 40 percent of the 269 AJCs in the study local areas. Twenty-two of the 102 AJCs were visited in both rounds, and the rest were visited in only one round. The study team visited an average of 3.5 AJCs per study local area, and visited more AJCs in the local areas with more than 5 AJCs. We visited all the AJCs in the study local areas that contained three or fewer AJCs. For the larger study local areas, we selected the AJCs randomly within strata defined by the number of customers served by the center, type of agency operating the AJC (public, private, or consortium), center type (comprehensive or affiliate), and whether the area was primarily urban or rural. In the study local areas that covered a large geographic area, such as South Dakota, we also created strata by geographic region within the area.

Site visitors interviewed more than 700 respondents during their site visits, including local WIA administrators, AJC managers, WIA career counselors, resource room staff members, business services staff members, ES managers, finance staff, and staff responsible for the management information systems. They also conducted interviews with customers, reviewed case files, and, with the permission of the career counselor and customer, observed the provision of some services. In addition, they conducted telephone interviews with local area administrators after the second round of visits, between December 2013 and February 2014. At the state level, we interviewed WIA administrative staff members to learn about the state's perspective on local areas' implementation of the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs.

WIASRD. ETA required states to submit individual-level data for every customer who received WIA-funded services, describing the customers’ characteristics, service receipt, and outcomes. Together, these data form the WIASRD. Approximately 15 months after the last customer was randomly assigned in each local area, we asked the state or local area to provide the WIASRD for all study participants.

Analysis of implementation study data. Site visitors prepared a single report for each of the 28 study local areas using information collected during both rounds of site visits. The study team coded passages in each report for their relevance to each of the site visit topics using qualitative data analysis software. Then, for each topic, the team pulled the relevant sections from across the 28 reports and analyzed the data across the local areas. Generally, we focused on comparing and contrasting the practices across study local areas; however, we also explored whether there was important variation across AJCs within a local area.

The study team did not visit all AJCs within each local area or talk to all WIA staff members. Therefore, our characterization of a local area throughout this report derives from the preponderance of evidence collected for the local area in the AJCs we visited. In instances when an approach or circumstance changed within a local area from the first site visit to the second, we based our characterization of the local area on the first visit.

Organization of this report

This report provides the findings from the implementation study—the services offered by the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and the context in which they were offered. Chapter II describes the 28 local areas included in the evaluation, including their geographic, political, and economic contexts, their levels of WIA funding, the networks of AJCs in the local areas, and the characteristics of the study participants they served. Chapters III, IV, and V then describe the core, intensive, and training services that were offered by the study local areas, respectively, and how customers moved from one service tier to the next. Chapter VI describes supportive and follow-up services. The final chapter, Chapter VII, discusses some cross-cutting findings and discusses their relevance under WIOA.

II. THE SERVICE DELIVERY CONTEXT

An understanding of the implementation and effectiveness of the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs requires an understanding of the context in which they operated. This context includes the geographic, political, and economic environment, the level of available program funding, the AJC infrastructure, and the characteristics of the population served in each study local area at the time the study was implemented. These contextual factors may have affected local decisions about how and to whom services were offered and the extent to which these services affected customers' employment outcomes.

The study local areas were diverse in many ways. One study local area encompassed only part of a small county while another encompassed a whole state. And while one study local area received only about \$0.5 million in formula funding in PY 2011 for its WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs, another received about \$36 million. Reflecting these different contexts as well as different policy decisions, the number of AJCs in the study local areas ranged from 1 to 30. In calendar year 2012, more than 215,000 customers "exited" or left the Adult or Dislocated Worker program in one local area, while only about 300 customers exited one of the programs in another local area. The characteristics of the customers—especially whether they met the definition of dislocated worker and the race and ethnicity of the customers—also varied significantly across study local areas.

The study occurred after the end of a recession when unemployment rates were still high and funding for the programs was declining. While the unemployment rate varied across the study local areas, the national unemployment rate was about 8 percent during calendar year 2012 when most customers enrolled in the study. Funding for the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs was declining and in PY 2012 was less than \$2 billion, the lowest level it had been in more than a decade, even in nominal terms.

This chapter provides more details about the context in which services were offered during the period when customers were enrolled in the study. It begins by describing the geographic, political, and economic environments in the study local areas. It then discusses their program funding, number of customers served, and AJC networks. It ends with a description of the characteristics of customers who enrolled in the study.

Geographic, political, and economic environments

Under WIA, local jurisdictions provided Adult and Dislocated Worker program services within a local area. While WIA required that state governors take into account local labor markets and the areas served by educational institutions when defining the boundaries of their states' local areas, they still had considerable discretion in defining the local areas.

Geographic size. Because of governors' discretion, the sizes and shapes of study local areas, as of local areas generally, varied considerably (Table II.1). Six study local areas each

Table II.1. Features of the study local areas

Local area	Square miles	Number of counties	Number of labor markets	Percentage urban	WIA funding (\$000s)	Number of exiters in CY 2012
Atlanta Region (Georgia)	1,840	7	<1	93	\$7,023	880
Capital Region (New York)	1,380	3	<1	85	\$1,844	15,176
Central Pennsylvania	5,354	9	8	60	\$2,439	2,146
Central Region (Missouri)	11,784	19	14+	50	\$2,282	25,474
Chautauqua County (New York)	1,060	1	1	56	\$507	5,192
Chicago (Illinois)	945	1	<1	100	\$15,755	7,044
East Tennessee	4,337	9	6+	50	\$2,071	432
Essex County (New Jersey)	102	<1	<1	100	\$1,827	307
First Coast (Florida)	3,929	6	2	87	\$9,651	1,491
Fresno County (California)	5,958	1	1	89	\$11,357	1,561
Gulf Coast (Texas)	12,189	13	4+	92	\$23,082	12,073
Indianapolis (Indiana)	396	1	<1	99	\$5,628	4,638
Louisville (Kentucky)	1,869	7	<1	89	\$3,925	466
Lower Savannah (South Carolina)	3,908	6	4+	47	\$2,334	592
Muskegon (Michigan)	1,011	2	2	68	\$1,686	452
New Orleans (Louisiana)	169	1	<1	99	\$1,379	3,249
New York City	303	5	<1	100	\$36,329	215,123
North Central Texas	10,527	14	4+	79	\$7,818	796
Northwest Pennsylvania	4,398	6	5	60	\$2,076	282
Sacramento (California)	964	1	<1	98	\$8,468	2,987
Santee-Lynches (South Carolina)	2,409	4	3+	49	\$1,269	322
Seattle-King County (Washington)	2,116	1	<1	97	\$7,001	1,199
South Dakota	75,811	66	57	57	\$2,759	1,039
South Plains (Texas)	13,595	15	14	79	\$1,348	165
Southeast Michigan	1,023	1+	1+	95	\$6,170	1,160
Southwest Corner Pennsylvania	1,868	3	1+	68	\$2,119	292
Twin Districts (Mississippi)	14,513	24	16	47	\$5,508	13,942
Waukesha-Ozaukee-Washington Counties (Wisconsin)	1,213	3	<1	84	\$1,341	566
Average	6,606	8.3	5.8	78	\$6,250	11,395
Median	1,993	4.5	2.0	84	\$2,599	1,180

Sources: ETA provided information on the geographic configurations of local areas. Number of square miles covered by area was estimated from Census Quick Facts (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/index.html>). Number of counties represents the number of counties encompassed by the local area. + means that the local area includes part of an additional labor market or county. Boundaries of local labor markets were defined according to OMB Bulletin No. 10-02, available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/assets/bulletins/b10-02.pdf>. In calculating the average and median we counted a part of a county or labor market as a whole county or labor market. The percent of the local area's population that was urban was measured for 2010 from https://www.census.gov/geo/reference/ua/ualists_layout.html. Funding is for PY 2011 except in five study local areas, where it is for PY 2012: Chicago (Illinois), New Orleans (Louisiana), Northwest Pennsylvania, Santee-Lynches (South Carolina), and Seattle-King County (Washington). The PY 2012 funding reported for Chicago (Illinois) reflects the funding of only the City of Chicago. In PY2011, the Chicago local area consolidated with other local areas but only Chicago participated in the evaluation. The WIASRD provided the number of customers who exited from the local Adult or Dislocated Worker program in calendar year 2012 after receiving at least one staff-assisted service.

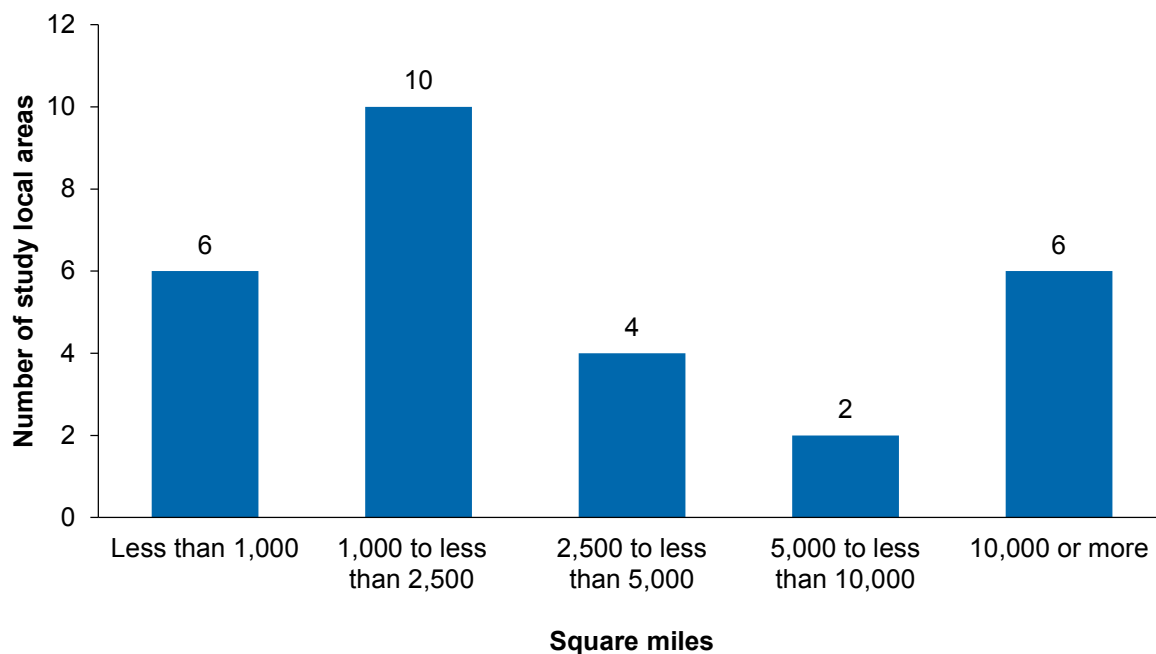
CY = calendar year

covered more than 10,000 square miles; an equal number each covered fewer than 1,000 square miles, with the smallest—Essex County (New Jersey)—covering just 102 square miles (Figure II.1). South Dakota, the largest local area, and the only local area that corresponded to the entire state, covered 76,000 square miles and was more than five times larger than the next largest local area. The median size for all 28 local areas was approximately 2,000 square miles.

Political jurisdictions. Local areas could be made up of political jurisdictions that include counties, cities, the balance of counties (the area of the counties that lies outside of the cities), or combinations of these jurisdictions. WIA charged the local elected officials of the jurisdictions within a local area to appoint members to the LWIB, which oversaw the local area’s WIA programs. In multiple-jurisdiction local areas, the officials and their appointees needed to work together to advance the needs of the local areas as well as those of their jurisdictions (Wolff 2015).

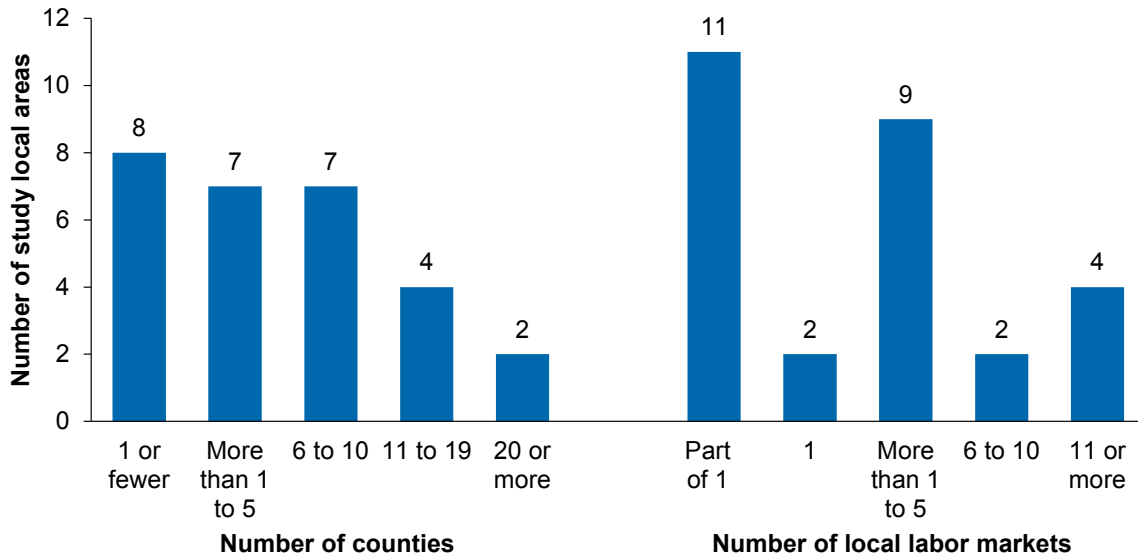
Among the study local areas, eight encompassed an entire county or less—seven encompassed the entire county, and one encompassed a single county but excluded its major city (Figure II.2). At the other end of the spectrum, 6 local areas were made up of 13 or more counties, and one of them (South Dakota) included the 66 counties that made up the entire state. On average, the 28 local areas served all or part of slightly more than 8 counties; the median number was 4.5.

Figure II.1. Geographic sizes of the 28 study local areas



Source: Census Quick Facts (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/index.html>).

Figure II.2. Number of counties and local labor markets within the 28 study local areas



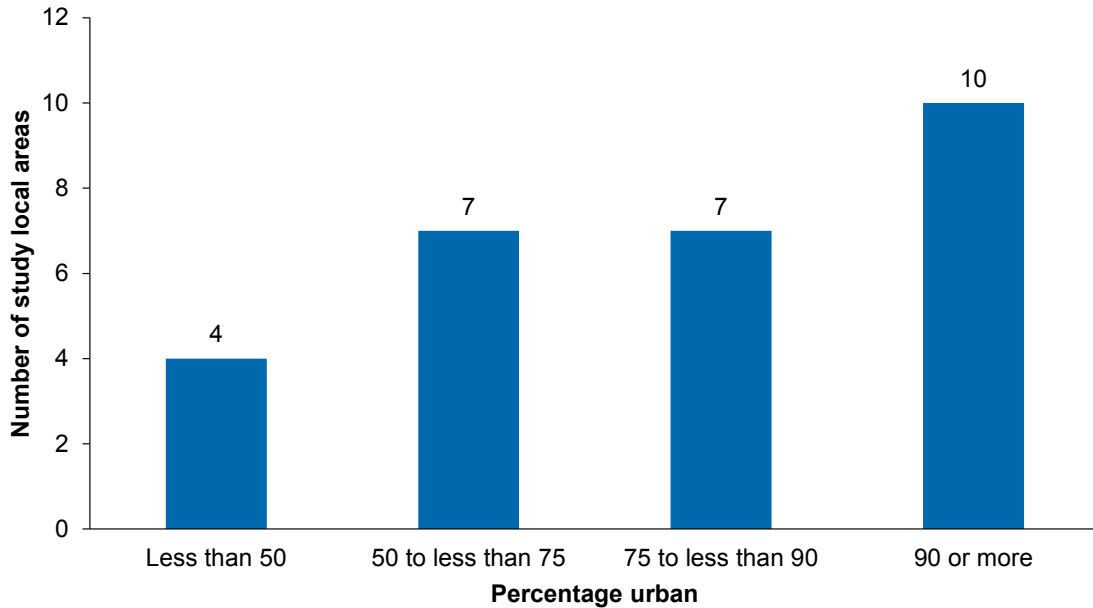
Source: Boundaries of local labor markets were defined according to OMB Bulletin No. 10-02, available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/assets/bulletins/b10-02.pdf>. The local labor market is defined at <http://www.bls.gov/lau/laufaq.htm>. ETA provided data on the geographic configurations of the local areas.

Note: We counted a local area as including a county or labor market if all or part of the county or labor market was contained within the local area.

Local labor markets. A local area can be part of a labor market that is distinct from its political jurisdiction. Indeed, WIA recognized that an LWIB might need to reach beyond its borders to serve its regional economy, which might include additional counties or cities (Ziegler 2015b). A large regional labor market with multiple in-demand career opportunities as well as multiple local areas might pose both challenges and opportunities for the local areas. Six study local areas served multistate labor markets. Eleven of the study local areas covered less than a single labor market area (Figure II.2). Two study local areas coincided exactly with single labor market areas. The remaining 15 study local areas consisted of more than one labor market area, and 4 of them each contained at least 11 labor market areas. The South Dakota statewide local area comprised 57 labor markets.

Urbanicity. The level of urbanicity might also have a bearing on how local areas designed their service delivery systems (Dunham et al. 2005). For example, an urban local area might have more available jobs, better public transportation, and more community resources to address customers' barriers to employment. To capture these differences, we calculated the percentage of each local area's population that resided in urban areas. Of the 28 local areas, 4 were less than 50 percent urban and 10 were at 90 percent or more (Figure II.3).

Figure II.3. Percentage of population in urban areas in the 28 study local areas



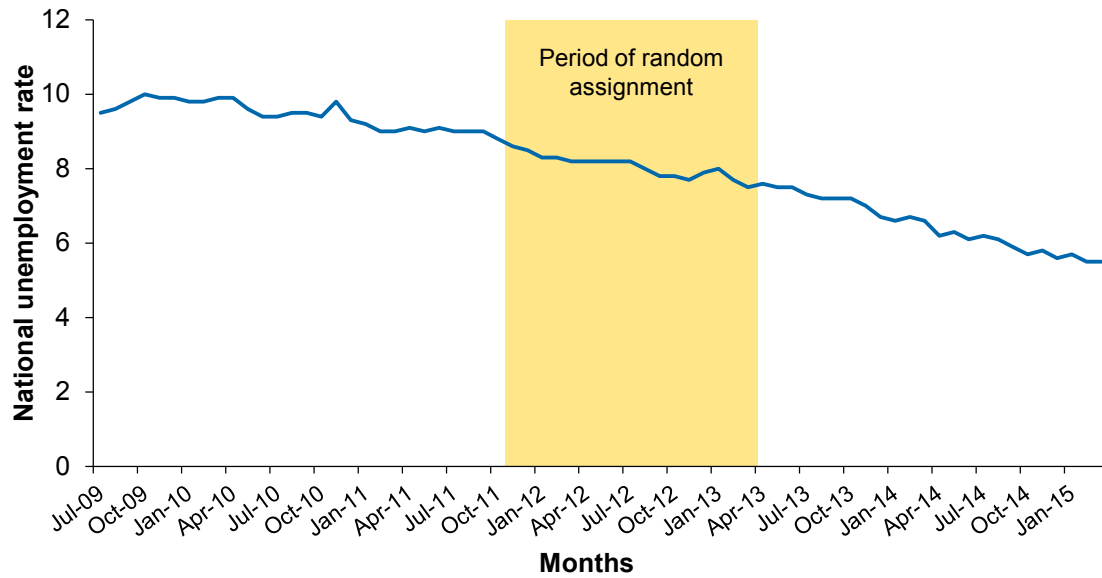
Source: U.S. Census Bureau (<https://www.census.gov/geo/reference/ua/urban-rural-2010.html>).

Economic environment. The state of the economy was likely an important contextual factor for the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. However, it is unclear how the economy might affect the programs’ impacts on customers (Lechner and Wunsch 2009; Greenberg et al. 2003). On the one hand, a slack labor market could have made it harder for program participants to find work. On the other hand, a slack labor market could also have made it harder for those who did not participate in the programs to find work and could have made the receipt of job search assistance and the participation in training even more effective.

The WIA Gold Standard Evaluation occurred as the nation was emerging from the major recession that occurred between December 2007 and June 2009 (National Bureau of Economic Research n.d.). In November 2011, when random assignment for the study began, the national unemployment rate was 8.6 percent (U.S. Department of Labor 2015a). As intake into the study proceeded, the economy continued to recover from the recession and unemployment rates decreased gradually, but they remained high (Figure II.4). At the end of random assignment in spring 2013, the national unemployment rate was 7.6 percent, and it continued to fall thereafter.

The national unemployment rate masks substantial variation across the 28 study local areas (Figure II.5). In 2012, when most study participants were randomly assigned, the national unemployment rate was 8.1 percent. The highest unemployment rate among local areas in the study was in Fresno County (California) at 15 percent, followed by Southeast Michigan at 11 percent. South Dakota had the lowest unemployment rate in 2012, at 4 percent.

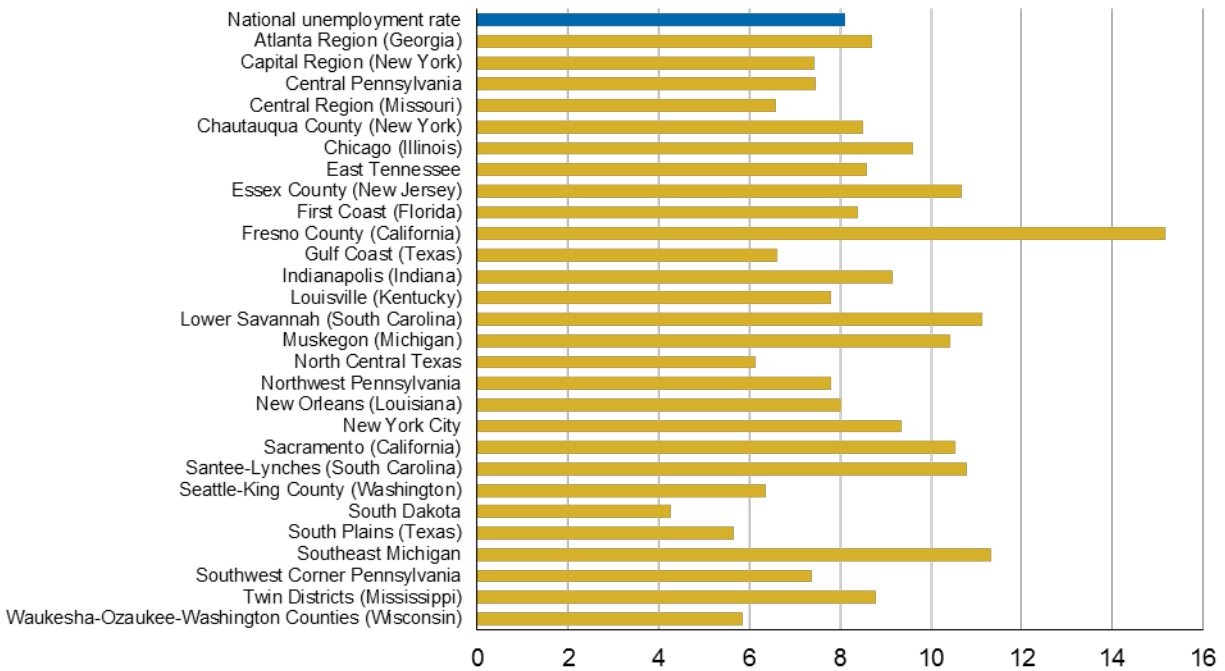
Figure II.4. National unemployment rate during the study period



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey*. Available at http://data.bls.gov/pdq/SurveyOutputServlet?request_action=wh&graph_name=LN_cpsbref3.

Note: The unemployment rate is seasonally adjusted.

Figure II.5. Annual unemployment rates in the 28 study local areas in 2012



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics: Labor Force Data by County, 2012 Annual Averages.

Note: Rates calculated from annual average unemployment rates for U.S. counties.

During the study intake period, a high, but decreasing, proportion of unemployed people had been unemployed for a long time. After the recession, the percentage of the unemployed who had been unemployed for 27 weeks or more peaked at 45 percent in summer 2011, before the beginning of the study, and steadily declined after that (Kosanovich and Theodossiou 2015). However, this percentage remained above 38 percent throughout the study intake period. In contrast, the percentage of unemployed who have been unemployed for 27 weeks or more in June 2015 was 26 percent.

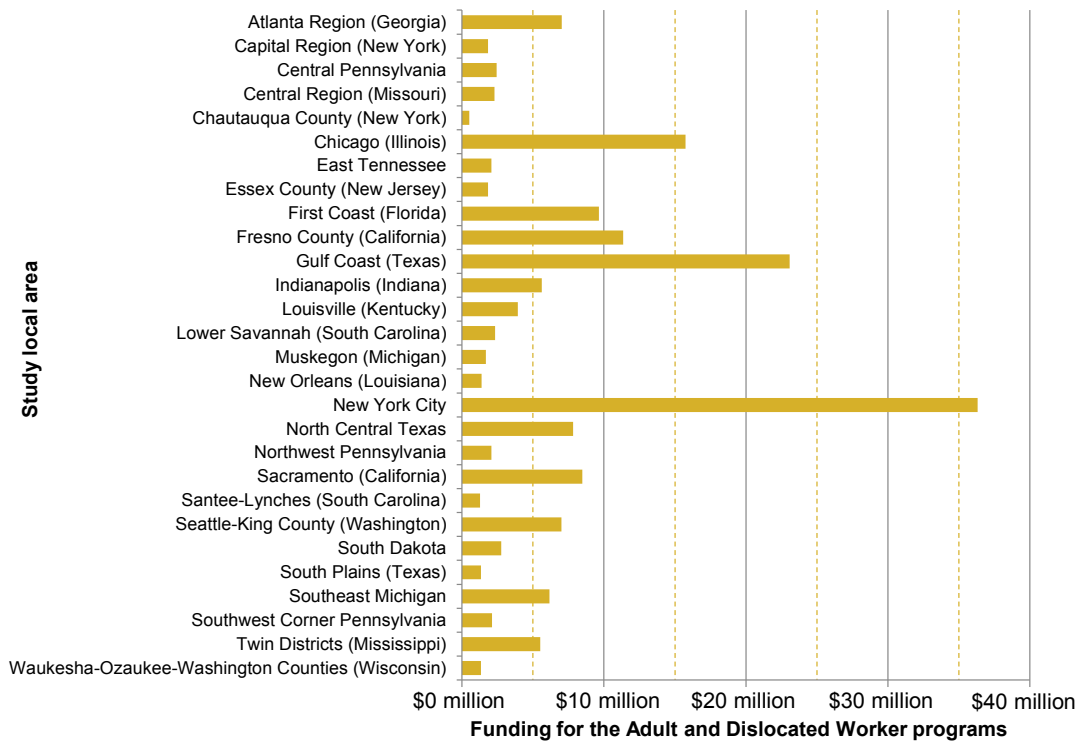
Program funding

WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker program funds were distributed to states, and states in turn distributed funds to their local areas. For both programs, formulas were used to determine allotments to states and then allocations to local areas. Although governors have some discretion over the factors used in the formulae for distributing Adult program funds, the percentage of the population that is low-income or unemployed and residing in areas of excess or substantial unemployment remains the most important criteria. In distributing funds for the Dislocated Worker program, governors must consider the incidence across the states' local areas of plant closings, mass layoffs, declining industries, and the concentration of unemployment and long-term unemployment, among other factors (WIA Section 133). The Adult program, but not the Dislocated Worker program, had a “hold harmless” clause that stipulated that each LWIB was to receive an allotment that was at least 90 percent of its average allocation percentage for the preceding two years.

In PY 2011, the study local areas received an average of \$6.2 million in combined WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker program formula funding, with a median of about \$2.6 million (Figure II.6). New York City received more than \$36 million in funding, and three other study local areas each received more than \$10 million. The study local area that received the least formula funds—Chautauqua County (New York)—received about \$500,000.

Funding for Adult and Dislocated Worker programs nationwide declined by 22 percent from 2000 to 2012 (U.S. Department of Labor 2015c). The drop in funding was particularly pronounced after 2010 (Figure II.7). The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) added funds to the programs (not shown in Figure II.7), but this infusion had ended before the beginning of the study. Funding for the ES program was also reduced over the same time period. As subsequent chapters will note, the decline in WIA and ES funding had implications for resources available for staffing, training, and other workforce services.

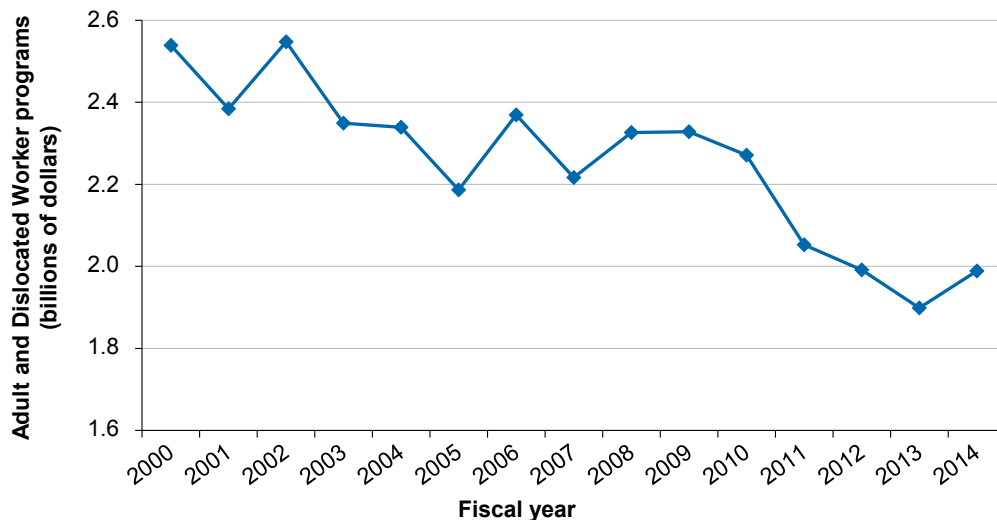
Figure II.6. Funding for Adult and Dislocated Worker programs, by study local area



Source: WIA Gold Standard Evaluation cost data collection, PY 2011 or 2012.

Notes: Funding is for PY 2011 except in five study local areas, where it is for PY 2012: Chicago (Illinois), New Orleans (Louisiana), Northwest Pennsylvania, Santee-Lynches (South Carolina), and Seattle-King County (Washington). The PY 2012 funding reported for Chicago (Illinois) reflects the funding of only the City of Chicago. In PY2011, the Chicago local area consolidated with other local areas but only Chicago participated in the evaluation.

Figure II.7. Trend in national funding for the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs, 2000-2014



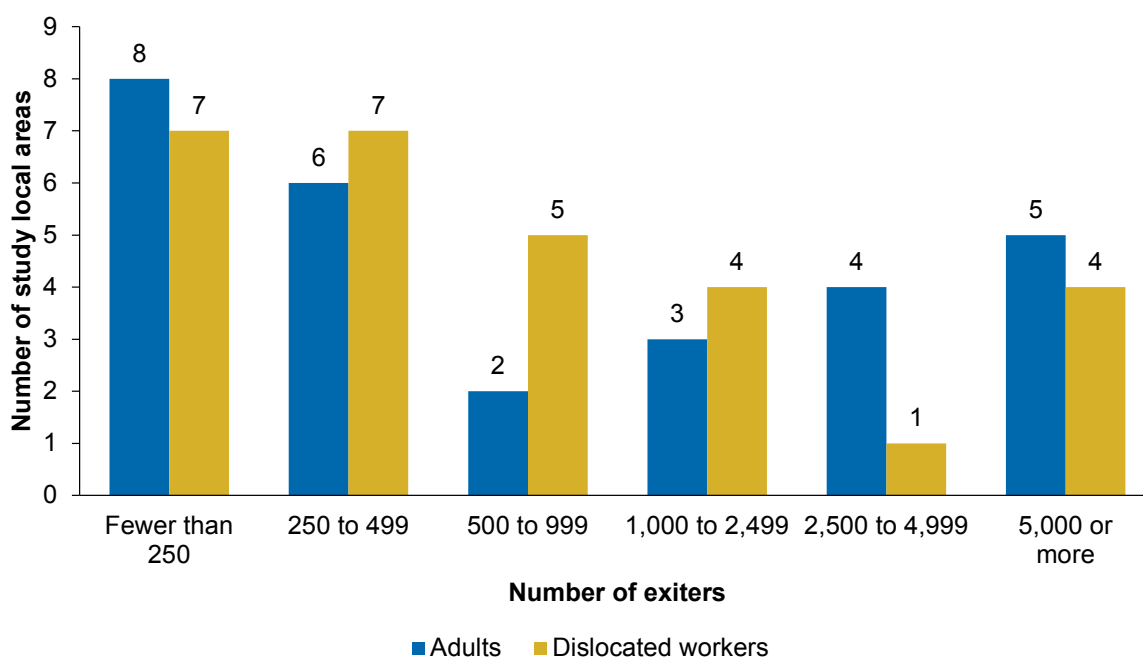
Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, "Training and Employment Programs, Summary of Budget Authority, FY 1984 to 2012, by Year of Appropriation" (Washington, DC 2014). Available at <http://www.doleta.gov/budget/bahist.cfm>. U.S. Department of Labor, "FY 2015 Department of Labor Budget in Brief" (Washington, DC nd). Available at <https://www.dol.gov/dol/budget/2015/PDF/FY2015BIB.pdf>.

Notes: The data exclude special appropriations as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Number of customers served

Service delivery could also be affected by the number of customers over which the formula funds need to be spread. The local areas were required to report to ETA the number of persons who “exited” from the WIA Adult or Dislocated Worker program. An “exiter” was a customer who received a service from one or both of the programs but had not received services (other than some follow-up services) for 90 days and was not scheduled for future services. In 2012, more than 319,000 customers exited one or both of the programs after receiving a staff-assisted service in the 28 study local areas (Table II.1). Eight study local areas exited fewer than 250 adult exiters and seven local areas exited fewer than 250 dislocated worker exiters in 2012 (Figure II.8).² At the other extreme, some study local areas exited 5,000 or more customers in 2012, with the largest, New York City, exiting more than 200,000 customers combined across the two programs. New York City received the largest funding of the 28 local areas (Figure II.6), and, as discussed in Chapter III, provided nearly all new AJC customers with an enhanced intake, a WIA staff-assisted core service.

Figure II.8. Number of exiters in the 28 study local areas in calendar year 2012



Source: Public-use WIASRD data, 2012.

Notes: An “exiter” is a customer who received a staff-assisted service from either the Adult or Dislocated Worker program but has not received services (other than some follow-up services) for 90 days and is not scheduled for future services.

² When randomly sampling the study local areas, we sampled them only from local areas that provided intensive services to more than 100 customers a year. See Mastro et al. (2015) for details.

American Job Center networks

The AJC networks within each study local area provided the physical access points for adults and dislocated workers to access WIA and other employment-related services. Within the broad guidelines established by WIA, states and local areas had substantial flexibility in designing their AJC networks. WIA and subsequent federal regulations mandated that LWIBs operate at least one comprehensive center that offers core services, facilitates access to services from more than a dozen mandatory partners, and has on-site staff from at least one mandatory partner (typically WIA). States could establish additional standards for AJCs to be designated as comprehensive centers. WIA also allowed LWIBs to operate affiliate (sometimes referred to as satellite) AJCs that often offered limited services.

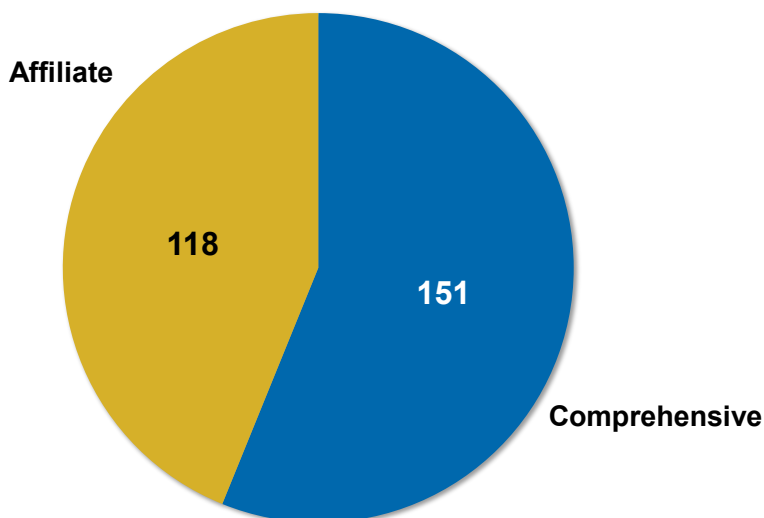
During calendar year 2012, the 28 study local areas operated a total of 269 AJCs. The number of AJCs per local area ranged from 1 to 30, with an average of about 10 (Kogan 2015). The number of AJCs varied considerably by study local area. One small local area in the study—Essex County (New Jersey)—had one AJC. In contrast, the Chicago (Illinois) local area had 30 AJCs.

Of the 269 AJCs operating in the 28 study local areas, 151 (56 percent) met their states' definition of a comprehensive center (Figure II.9). The 19 states containing study local areas used either the WIA definition of a comprehensive center or a more restrictive definition. (Because of states' varying requirements, one state's comprehensive AJC might resemble another state's affiliate AJC.) All but one of the 19 states with local areas participating in the study required that both WIA programs and ES, a mandatory partner, be physically located at comprehensive centers on at least a part-time basis. Some states also had more stringent requirements for the collocation of other partners at comprehensive AJCs. For example, one state in the study required that five specified mandatory partners be physically located at comprehensive centers. Most states required that comprehensive AJCs be open during regular business hours five days a week and that WIA staff be available during all business hours for customers to access core, intensive, and training services.

Together, the study local areas operated 118 affiliate AJCs. Of these, about 3 in 5 centers offered limited WIA services and/or were not open during regular business hours. Other affiliate centers offered a full range of WIA services and were open during regular business hours but did not have representatives from all state-required collocated partners.

Affiliate AJCs were established in both rural and urban areas. Lower Savannah (South Carolina) established seven AJCs to cover the large rural local area: three comprehensive AJCs; two affiliate AJCs that provided WIA, ES, and UI services; and two additional affiliate centers that only provided WIA services. WIA staff who worked out of the comprehensive AJCs traveled to the affiliate centers. The urban Chicago (Illinois) local area contracted with 17 community-based organizations to operate affiliate AJCs, most of which were designed to reach special groups of customers, such as immigrants, people with limited English proficiency, homeless individuals, or ex-offenders.

Figure II.9. Number of comprehensive and affiliate AJCs in the 28 study local areas in 2012



Source: WIA Gold Standard Evaluation qualitative data collection, 2012.

Note: An AJC is defined as comprehensive according to the state's definition. Some affiliate centers may have been comprehensive as defined by WIA but did not meet the state's additional requirements for a comprehensive center.

The Chicago (Illinois) and New York City local areas in the study also established affiliate centers that focused on specific industry sectors. These “sector AJCs” were similar to comprehensive AJCs in providing a full range of services to customers but different in their focus on one sector. For example, as part of its Workforce1 Career Center network, New York City operated a health care center and an industrial and transportation center, although the latter was not funded by WIA.

In addition to these permanent AJCs, seven study local areas used other methods to promote access, such as mobile vans, roving outreach teams, and unstaffed community access points with computers, often housed in libraries or other public buildings. These additional access points could provide job seekers with alternative ways to access services.

As funding for programs decreased, some study local areas responded by closing AJCs (Kirby 2015). Between our visits in 2012 and follow-up telephone calls in late 2013 and early 2014, one-third of study local areas had closed one or more centers, and the overall number of AJCs in the study sample declined by nearly 12 percent. One study local area that had 18 comprehensive centers in PY 2011 had only 5 comprehensive centers and 3 affiliate centers by PY 2013. In addition to closing centers, budget cuts led some local areas to relocate their AJCs to locations with lower rent costs or to reduce center operating hours by eliminating evening hours, closing 30 minutes earlier, or closing a center one or even several days per week.

Customer characteristics

The WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs served a diverse range of customers, many of whom have multiple barriers to employment. This was especially true of the customers in the study who had all been found eligible for intensive services before they were randomly assigned, and hence had not been successful in finding a job with core services alone. The diversity among

intensive service customers and the barriers to employment they faced are reflected in the characteristics of customers who participated in the study (Table II.2).

Table II.2. Characteristics of all customers, dislocated workers, and adults in the study

	All customers	Adults	Dislocated workers ^a	Difference between adults and dislocated workers
Adult (%)	55.6	100.0	0.0	100.0
Dislocated worker (%)	34.9	0.0	78.6	-78.6*
Both adult and dislocated worker (%)	9.5	0.0	21.4	-21.4*
Female (%)	57.3	58.9	55.4	3.4
Age at random assignment (%)				
18-20	3.3	5.2	0.8	4.4*
21-24	10.5	15.0	5.0	10.0*
25-32	22.1	25.6	17.6	8.0*
33-42	24.8	23.6	26.4	-2.8*
43-50	19.1	15.7	23.3	-7.6*
51 or older	20.2	14.9	26.9	-12.1*
Race/ethnicity (%)				
Hispanic	13.3	14.0	12.3	1.6
White, non-Hispanic	39.3	35.8	43.7	-7.9*
Black, non-Hispanic	41.3	43.1	39.0	4.2*
Asian	3.2	3.4	2.8	0.6
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, or Native American	1.2	1.5	0.8	0.8
Other, or multiple races	1.8	2.1	1.3	0.8
Primary spoken language is Spanish (%)	2.7	2.3	3.2	-0.8
Primary spoken language is neither English nor Spanish (%)	3.6	4.1	2.9	1.2
Highest degree (%)				
Less than high school diploma	6.9	8.2	5.3	2.9*
High school diploma or GED certificate	68.7	71.7	65.0	6.7*
Associate's or equivalent	9.1	8.7	9.6	-0.9*
Bachelor's or equivalent	11.9	9.2	15.1	-5.9*
Master's or higher	3.5	2.2	5.0	-2.8*
Received a vocational training certificate ^b (%)	16.7	16.8	16.5	0.3
Have health problems that limit work or training (%)	4.6	5.2	3.9	1.3*
Employed in past five years (%)	76.2	64.7	90.7	-26.1*
Average number of weeks since last employed ^c	67.2	74.9	60.5	14.4*
Number of weeks since last employed by duration (%)				
Working at random assignment	1.6	2.1	1.0	1.0*
1 to 26	12.7	11.1	14.7	-3.5*
27 to 52	21.6	15.7	28.9	-13.2*
53 to 104	26.8	20.7	34.4	-13.6*
105 to 260	13.5	14.9	11.7	3.2
Not worked in the past five years	23.9	35.5	9.3	26.2*
Average hourly wage in 2012 dollars ^d	14.9	12.3	17.1	-4.8*
Receipt of public assistance (%)				
TANF, SSI/SSDI, or GA	11.4	15.3	6.5	8.8*
SNAP or WIC	35.6	45.5	23.3	22.2*
Unemployment compensation	29.0	9.9	53.1	-43.2*
Other public assistance	1.2	1.6	0.7	0.9*
Visited a center previously (%)	34.4	33.7	35.2	-1.5
Sample size	34,429	21,458	12,971	

Source: WIA Gold Standard Evaluation's study registration form.

Notes: Sample includes all customers in the impact study analysis sample. In total, 35,665 customers were randomly assigned, but 1,236 were later withdrawn from the study because they withdrew consent or became ineligible (Mastri et al. 2015). Data are weighted to account for differing probabilities of local area selection and local area participation.

^aThis includes customers who intake staff recorded as being both a dislocated worker and an adult.

^bRespondent reported receiving a vocational or technical degree or certificate or a business degree or certificate.

^cFor customers who reported having been employed in the last five years and not currently working.

^dFor customers who reported working in last five years.

*Indicates regression adjusted difference in means is statistically significant at the 5% level. Chi square tests of the hypothesis that there are no differences in distributions across categorical variables were conducted for the following categories: age at random assignment (p-value<0.001), race/ethnicity (p-value<0.001), highest degree (p-value<0.001), and weeks since last employment (p-value<0.001).

GA = general assistance; GED = General Educational Development certificate; SNAP = Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; SSDI = Social Security Disability Insurance; SSI = Supplemental Security Income; TANF = Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; WIC = Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children.

Customers in the study had diverse demographic characteristics. Women made up 57 percent of those in the study and men made up 43 percent. Although customers varied in age from 18 to over 80, about 20 percent of customers in the study were 51 or older when they were found eligible for intensive services and entered the study. The racial composition of customers was also quite diverse and many customers were racial or ethnic minorities. Only a small proportion (6 percent) of customers in the study did not speak English as a primary language.

Nearly all customers in the study were not working at the time they were randomly assigned and many faced barriers to employment:

- About two-thirds of customers (69 percent) had a high school degree or had passed the General Educational Development (GED) test but had no post-secondary degree. Four percent had a master's degree or other graduate degree. In addition, 17 percent of customers had some type of vocational or technical certificate, such as a commercial driver's license.
- About one quarter of customers (24 percent) had not been employed in the five years before random assignment.
- The average customer had been without a job for more than a year and 86 percent had been without a job for 27 or more weeks, and hence meet the definition of long-term unemployed.
- Among those customers who were employed in the five years before they were randomly assigned, the average wage in the most recent job that the customers held prior to random assignment was about \$15 per hour in 2012 dollars.
- More than a third of customers (36 percent) reported receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits at the time of random assignment, and 29 percent reported receiving unemployment compensation. Eleven percent received TANF, Supplemental Security Income or Social Security Disability Insurance, or General Assistance at that time.
- About 5 percent of customers in the study reported a health problem severe enough to limit their ability to work or participate in training.
- About two-thirds of the sample were new customers who reported that they had not visited an American Job Center previously.

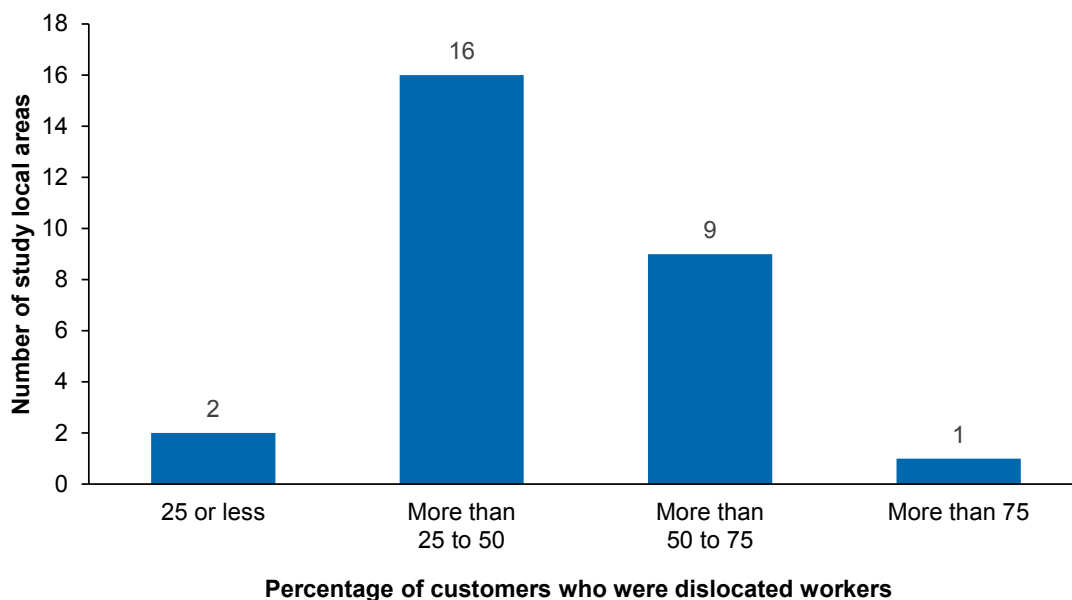
Many WIA customers meet the definition of both an adult and dislocated worker (see Chapter I for these definitions), and the decision of whether to designate them to receive services

from the Adult or Dislocated Worker program may depend on available funding. Just before each customer was randomly assigned into the study, we asked the intake staff to record whether the customer was considered an adult, a dislocated worker, or both. Over half (56 percent) of all customers were considered adults and 35 percent were considered dislocated workers. The remaining customers were considered by intake staff as both adults and dislocated workers. Because the definition of a dislocated worker is more restrictive than the definition of an adult, we counted customers whom the intake staff considered to be both an adult and a dislocated worker as dislocated workers in Tables II.2 and II.3.

Compared to adults, dislocated workers were less disadvantaged (Table II.2). On average, dislocated workers were more educated than adults. Fifteen percent of dislocated workers had a bachelor’s degree and 5 percent had a master’s degree, compared with 9 percent and 2 percent, respectively, of adults. Not surprisingly, given the definition of a dislocated worker, dislocated workers were, on average, more likely to have been employed in the five years preceding random assignment (91 percent) than adults (65 percent). Dislocated workers had been without a job for an average of 61 weeks at random assignment compared with 75 weeks for adults. The most recent average hourly wage earned by dislocated workers (among those who were employed in the five years before random assignment) was \$17 (measured in 2012 dollars); in contrast, the most recent average hourly wage of adults was only \$12 (measured in 2012 dollars). Dislocated workers were also, on average, older than adults. For instance, 27 percent of dislocated workers in the study were 51 years or older, compared with 15 percent of adults.

While about 44 percent of the customers in the study were dislocated workers (or both a dislocated worker and an adult), the mix of customers between dislocated workers and adults varied across the study local areas (Figure II.10). Dislocated workers comprised 25 to 50 percent

Figure II.10. Number of study local areas by percentage of customers who were dislocated workers



Source: WIA Gold Standard Evaluation’s study registration form.

Note: We counted customers who were considered by intake staff to be both an adult and a dislocated worker as dislocated workers.

of customers in 16 of the 28 study local areas. In only one study local area—Essex County (New Jersey)—was the percent of customers who were dislocated workers greater than 75, although intake staff considered many of these customers as adults as well as dislocated workers. Dislocated workers comprised 25 percent or less of the customers in the study in only two local areas: First Coast (Florida) and Santee-Lynches (South Carolina).

The demographic and other characteristics of customers served also varied across study local areas (Table II.3). For example, the proportion of customers who were 51 or older varied from 8 percent in East Tennessee to 41 percent in Waukesha-Ozaukee-Washington Counties (Wisconsin). The racial and ethnic composition also varied greatly across local areas, with Black customers making up as many as 88 percent of customers in New Orleans (Louisiana), and as few as 4 percent in Chautauqua County (New York). Hispanic customers accounted for 57 percent of customers in South Plains (Texas) and less than 0.5 percent in East Tennessee.

The local areas with a high proportion of customers who had worked in the five years before random assignment were typically those with a high proportion of dislocated workers. However, there were some exceptions (Table II.3). Even though only 17 percent of customers in Santee Lynches (South Carolina) were dislocated workers, 84 percent of customers had worked in the five years before random assignment. The average wage at the last job a customer had held varied from less than \$12 (in 2012 dollars) in six study local areas to over \$20 (in 2012 dollars) in Seattle-King County (Washington). Study local areas also varied in the education of the customers they served. Whereas in Seattle-King County (Washington), 53 percent of customers did not have more than a high school diploma or GED certificate, the corresponding figure in Lower Savannah (South Carolina) was 90 percent.

Table II.3. Select customer characteristics, by study local area

	Percent of customers with this characteristic (except for hourly wage)						
	Dislocated worker ^a	51 or older	Black and non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Worked in last 5 years	Average last hourly wage, 2012 dollars	Highest degree is high school diploma, GED, or less
Atlanta Region (Georgia)	42.7	16.1	74.6	5.7	77.4	14.9	74.1
Capital Region (New York)	55.1	24.8	28.1	8.5	84.9	16.3	67.0
Central Pennsylvania	50.3	26.1	5.8	2.2	75.7	13.3	75.9
Central Region (Missouri)	57.4	14.2	8.1	1.3	78.7	11.6	83.6
Chautauqua County (New York)	46.1	13.0	3.9	8.1	72.4	11.8	81.6
Chicago (Illinois)	40.2	20.9	65.4	14.3	77.6	16.2	67.2
East Tennessee	28.2	8.3	5.1	0.3	67.0	11.5	87.0
Essex County (New Jersey)	82.0	24.7	67.2	15.1	84.6	19.9	70.2
First Coast (Florida)	23.0	11.8	47.2	6.4	53.9	13.5	74.6
Fresno County (California)	39.2	17.1	10.9	51.0	80.4	13.3	79.4
Gulf Coast (Texas)	25.2	13.3	55.5	24.1	64.2	13.7	81.1
Indianapolis (Indiana)	29.2	18.3	60.2	3.4	68.3	14.0	69.8
Louisville (Kentucky)	42.9	17.0	44.4	16.6	62.5	12.6	81.2
Lower Savannah (South Carolina)	36.9	15.1	65.6	1.6	74.6	11.8	89.5
Muskegon (Michigan)	59.6	39.4	15.2	4.0	84.8	13.5	72.9
New Orleans (Louisiana)	25.6	18.3	87.5	3.4	70.5	13.6	82.7
New York City	35.7	22.1	50.2	27.1	75.9	16.8	60.2
North Central Texas	56.3	21.9	30.0	16.0	81.5	16.2	77.3

Percent of customers with this characteristic (except for hourly wage)							
	Dislocated worker ^a	51 or older	Black and non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Worked in last 5 years	Average last hourly wage, 2012 dollars	Highest degree is high school diploma, GED, or less
Northwest Pennsylvania	73.2	27.6	10.3	1.6	85.4	14.1	72.6
Sacramento (California)	26.7	20.3	27.5	22.2	74.5	14.8	78.9
Santee-Lynches (South Carolina)	17.0	25.1	73.1	1.7	84.2	12.2	88.5
Seattle-King County (Washington)	50.1	26.9	23.6	6.3	73.7	21.0	53.1
South Dakota	29.3	22.8	4.7	3.0	75.3	12.2	80.2
South Plains (Texas)	31.8	10.9	15.5	57.3	70.9	11.4	92.3
Southeast Michigan	61.4	27.5	52.8	2.5	84.5	15.5	74.5
Southwest Corner Pennsylvania	52.8	26.8	12.2	0.4	81.7	15.2	63.9
Twin Districts (Mississippi)	29.1	18.5	43.7	2.2	54.5	11.2	78.7
Waukesha-Ozaukee-Washington Counties (Wisconsin)	45.1	41.1	4.9	3.0	85.8	17.8	57.6

Source: WIA Gold Standard Evaluation's study registration form.

Note: Based on the 34,429 customers in the analysis sample for the impact analysis.

^aThis includes customers who intake staff recorded as being both a dislocated worker and an adult.

GED = General Educational Development

III. CORE SERVICES

WIA required that core services be available to all customers who visited an AJC, without regard to employment status, work history, or other eligibility criteria (U.S. Department of Labor 2000). The WIA Adult, Dislocated Worker, ES, and other programs together provided these core services. As the first tier of services offered at the AJCs, core services included the provision of information and job search tools in a resource room at the AJC as well as workshops and some “light touch” staff assistance. Some of the information and tools were also accessible via the Internet. All study participants, regardless of the study group to which they were randomly assigned, were allowed to access core services freely before and after random assignment.

We found that all local areas participating in the study offered a broadly similar array of core services. Their AJCs had resource rooms with computers and access to job listings, information about services available from WIA and other programs, and online tools to support job search and career planning. Most study local areas also offered workshops on topics related to finding and keeping a job and provided an opportunity for customers to meet briefly with an AJC staff member for one-on-one assistance with using the tools in the resource room.

Despite these commonalities, study local areas varied in how WIA and ES collaborated to provide core services. About one-third of the study local areas used a functionally-aligned staffing model in which WIA and ES staff provided most core services interchangeably, irrespective of their program affiliation. In the other study local areas, WIA and ES staff had different roles, specializing by service, customer type, and/or location.

Study local areas also varied in their approach to serving new AJC customers. Eighteen study local areas offered a customer-initiated approach, in which new AJC customers were directed first to use the resource room and were offered additional staff assistance if they were unsuccessful in independently searching for a job. However, to address a concern that some new customers may not have the skills to conduct an effective job search independently, staff in eight study local areas instead conducted an assessment of the needs of all new customers when they first visited the AJC. Customers deemed capable of finding a job without more staff assistance were directed to use the resource room, while other customers were directed to more intensive staff assistance (as either a staff-assisted core or intensive service) or training. In the remaining two study local areas, those wanting to conduct job searches were referred to the resource rooms and those seeking training were referred to WIA career counselors to determine training eligibility.

This chapter describes the core services offered by the local areas in the study. It begins by describing the role of the WIA and ES programs in the provision of core services. It then discusses three broad approaches that the study local areas used to serve new AJC customers. It ends by describing the types of core services that were offered by the study local areas.

Role of WIA and ES in providing core services

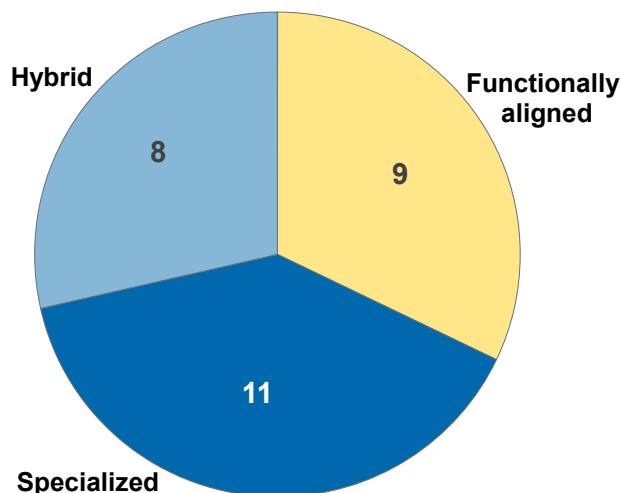
In all study local areas, both WIA and ES staff provided core services. In some study local areas, other AJC program partners, such as the Senior Community Service Employment Program

(SCSEP), also provided some core services. Three broad staffing models were used to divide the responsibilities of providing core services between WIA and ES staff:³

1. In the **functionally-aligned** model, WIA and ES staff members were functionally interchangeable in the provision of three or more core services, such as greeting customers, providing AJC orientations, staffing resource rooms, and facilitating workshops. Under this model, a particular function was coordinated and performed by both WIA and ES staff and customers could expect to receive equivalent services no matter who served them. Local area staff argued that this model allowed customers to receive services more quickly, because customers could be served by the next available staff person from either program. Nine study local areas used this model.
2. In the **specialized** model, staff from each program had specific responsibilities for core services that did not overlap. They specialized by (1) service (for example, ES staff provided all core services, while WIA staff focused on intensive and training services); (2) population (such as ES staff providing core services to UI recipients and WIA staff providing core services to other customers); and (3) location (such as WIA and ES providing core services but in different AJCs). Eleven study local areas used this model.
3. In the **hybrid** model, WIA and ES used a functionally-aligned staffing model to provide one or two core services but a specialized staffing model in providing others. The remaining eight study local areas used this approach.

Regardless of the staffing approach, customers were generally not aware of the different program affiliations of staff members providing core services.

Figure III.1. Staffing models used by the 28 study local areas



Source: WIA Gold Standard Evaluation qualitative data collection, 2012–2013.

³ See Koller and Paprocki (2015) for more information on these staffing models.

Administrators in the study local areas noted that the high unemployment rate coupled with the funding declines discussed in Chapter II increased the workload of ES staff. During the recession, Congress passed the Emergency Unemployment Compensation Act of 2008 (EUC08) to extend benefits to UI claimants who had collected all of (or “exhausted”) their regular UI entitlements. Additional legislation extended this program through January 1, 2014. The Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 required that states provide reemployment services to most EUC08 recipients. Many of these services were provided by ES staff at AJCs. This work taxed the capacity of ES staff to provide other core services. In turn, this taxed WIA staff, who needed to provide core services that ES staff provided prior to the EUC08.

Approaches to serving new AJC customers

In 2012, study local areas took three different general approaches to serving customers when they first arrived at an AJC, and these approaches fundamentally affected who was offered different types of WIA services (Table III.1):⁴

1. **Customer-initiated approach.** In 18 of the 28 study local areas, new AJC customers were informed about the availability of core and other services and encouraged to use the AJC resource room with only a “light touch” of staff support. In these local areas, individualized staff attention was not offered until a customer requested it or a staff member observed that a customer needed staff assistance to successfully find a job.
2. **Enhanced-intake approach.** In 8 of the 28 study local areas, all new AJC customers received an assessment, sometimes referred to as “triage.” (This assessment is discussed later in this chapter.) The goal of this approach was to ensure that all customers received the appropriate services quickly. Generally, customers who were assessed as likely to be successful searching for a job on their own were encouraged to use the resource room and other core services independently. Customers who lacked computer, language, or basic skills or who had multiple barriers to employment, and hence were considered as unlikely to find a job independently, were offered staff-assisted core or intensive services. Seven of the eight study local areas that used this enhanced-intake approach used a functionally-aligned staffing model.
3. **Training-preparation approach.** In two study local areas—Atlanta Region (Georgia) and First Coast (Florida)—the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs served almost exclusively customers interested in training. New customers who expressed an interest in training were referred to a WIA staff person who immediately began discussing with the customers their eligibility for training. Customers who were not interested in training typically accessed core services provided through the resource room or intensive services provided by other AJC partners.

Administrators and staff at many study local areas reported that although many AJC customers could take full advantage of core services, others did not have the skills to do so. Those with weak literacy skills, poor computer skills, or language barriers found it difficult to conduct a job search independently. The eight study local areas that used the enhanced-intake approach addressed the concern by rapidly directing customers who were less likely to be

⁴ See D’Amico (2015) for more information about these approaches.

successful in independent job search away from core services to more staff-intensive services. Other strategies adopted to address this concern included hiring staff members fluent in languages frequently spoken by core customers, offering workshops on basic computer fundamentals or on how to use the job-matching databases, and stationing additional staff in the resource room.

Table III.1. Different approaches to serving new AJC customers in the 28 study local areas

Local area	Customer-initiated approach	Enhanced-intake approach	Training-preparation approach
Atlanta Region (Georgia)			X
Capital Region (New York)		X	
Central Pennsylvania	X		
Central Region (Missouri)		X	
Chautauqua County (New York)		X	
Chicago (Illinois)	X		
East Tennessee	X		
Essex County (New Jersey)	X		
First Coast (Florida)			X
Fresno County (California)	X		
Gulf Coast (Texas)	X		
Indianapolis (Indiana)	X		
Louisville (Kentucky)	X		
Lower Savannah (South Carolina)	X		
Muskegon (Michigan)	X		
New Orleans (Louisiana)		X	
New York City		X	
North Central Texas	X		
Northwest Pennsylvania		X	
Sacramento (California)		X	
Santee-Lynches (South Carolina)	X		
Seattle-King County (Washington)	X		
South Dakota	X		
South Plains (Texas)	X		
Southeast Michigan	X		
Southwest Corner Pennsylvania	X		
Twin Districts (Mississippi)		X	
Waukesha-Ozaukee-Washington Counties (Wisconsin)	X		

Source: WIA Gold Standard Evaluation qualitative data collection, 2012.

Core service offerings

The study local areas' core services fell into five categories: (1) the greeter at the reception desk, (2) orientation to the available core services, (3) resource rooms, (4) workshops, and (5) initial assessment and other staff assistance provided to core customers. Both affiliate and comprehensive AJCs generally offered all these core services, although the comprehensive AJCs usually offered a wider selection of core workshops.

Greeter

When new customers arrived at an AJC, they typically met with a designated greeter, often the receptionist at the front desk. The greeter asked customers some variant of the question, "How may I assist you today?" Greeters in some study local areas provided customers with materials, such as a calendar of workshops, a list of available services, and the rules for using the resource room. Interaction with the greeter was the first core service all new AJC customers received.

Most study local areas required new AJC customers to "register" as AJC customers during their first visit by providing some information either on a paper form or in an online system. This registration served multiple purposes that varied by local area: (1) it allowed the greeter to identify whether customers should be directed to a particular program (for example referring a veteran to a veterans' representative of the Jobs for Veterans State Grants program); (2) it was used to verify whether customers were already enrolled in ES and, if necessary, enroll them; and (3) it allowed local areas to track how many new customers visited the AJC. In a few study local areas, customers were issued a "swipe" card during their first visit that they scanned each time they entered the resource room.

The program or programs that funded the greeter position varied by local area and among centers within a local area. The greeter position was most often shared by the ES and WIA programs with other AJC partners taking an occasional shift. In the study local areas in which the position was shared by WIA and ES, either: (1) WIA and ES each assigned one or more employees to take turns staffing the position, or (2) each program contributed to hiring a full-time greeter. In other AJCs, the greeter's responsibility was assigned to ES staff only; to WIA staff only; or to volunteers, SCSEP participants, or employees of another program partner.

Orientation to core services

Most local areas in the study offered customers either a group or a one-on-one orientation to core and other services available at the AJC. Some study local areas required new customers to attend an orientation before using the resource room; in other local areas it was voluntary. (Box III.1 describes a one-on-one orientation offered in one study local area.) During a typical orientation, new customers toured the AJC and received basic information about the resource room tools and workshops available to all AJC customers. Some AJCs provided a brief demonstration of self-service tools (such as the state's job matching system) during the orientation; other AJCs offered workshops for customers who wanted more detailed information about how to use specific online tools. If they did not already have it, new customers would also receive a leaflet listing the schedule of the workshops offered that month.

Box III.1. Providing new customers with a one-on-one orientation to core services

As observed in one AJC in South Dakota, all new customers to the AJC registered in SDWorks, the state's one-stop operating system, and then received a one-on-one orientation before using the resource room. An ES staff member provided the orientation. During the orientation, the staff member showed new customers how to use the state's job matching system including how to enter their work history, create a resume, pick a job goal, and look for a job order. For customers who were not computer literate, the staff member provided instructions on how to use the computer and Internet. At the end of the orientation, the staff member briefly described other services and resources available within the AJC and the larger community.

Resource rooms

Most comprehensive and affiliate AJCs included a resource room. All resource rooms provided individual computer work stations with Internet access. Most resource rooms also contained printers, copiers, and fax machines that customers could use for their job search activities. Some study local areas set a limit on the length of time any customer could work on a computer if other customers were waiting. The time limits typically varied from 30 minutes (for “express” computers used to submit job applications) to two hours. During our site visits, we observed that some resource rooms were full, with customers waiting for their turn on a computer, and others had available computers with no customers waiting.

In 24 of the 28 study local areas, AJCs typically contained one resource room that was funded by both WIA and ES and served both WIA and ES customers. However, four study local areas established separate resource rooms for ES and WIA customers. In one of these four local areas, at least three AJCs each housed two separate resource rooms. The resource room near the center's reception desk was typically referred to as the “ES resource room,” as it included mostly materials provided by the ES program. Another resource room at the rear of the center was commonly referred to as the “WIA resource room,” and primarily contained materials provided by WIA. In another study local area, the ES and WIA resource rooms were in different but adjacent buildings; in the other two study local areas that established separate resource rooms, the WIA and ES resource rooms were in different AJCs.

Self-service tools in the resource room. The information and tools available in most resource rooms included:

- **Information about available community services.** Study local areas provided access to information about a range of local services through online resource databases, websites, and printed material. These resources provided customers with detailed information about the locations of AJCs throughout the state, how to access programs and services available elsewhere in the community, and information about program eligibility requirements. The resources also included information on occupations deemed “in demand,” training programs on the eligible training provider list (ETPL), training providers, and financial aid and scholarships. One study local area provided access to an online database of community resources and a telephone number that customers could call to obtain assistance with the

database from call-center staff who were not affiliated with the AJC. Resource room staff also informed customers where and how to apply for UI benefits.

- **Job matching systems.** Resource room staff members reported that the most popular resource room tools were the job matching systems. Typically, customers had access to the ES job matching systems (or “job banks”). These systems included lists of job openings and allowed customers to search for jobs that matched their skills and experiences. In many systems, customers who uploaded their resumes into the state’s job matching system received regular announcements via e-mail about new job listings relevant to their skills and experience. Box III.2 describes three job matching systems available in one study local area.

Box III.2. An example of job search support tools

In the seven AJCs in the Seattle-King County (Washington) local area, computers in the resource room provided customers with shortcuts to three well-developed online job-search tools:

- **WorkSource Washington.** The state ES job matching system lists job orders posted by employers. Registered customers could also save previous job searches and request notifications when relevant new jobs were posted.
- **Career Coach.** This job search system, purchased by the local area, linked customers to an online directory of job openings at www.indeed.com. In addition, the system linked to O*NET codes that provided labor market information for the targeted occupation and to training programs related to the targeted occupation.
- **Washington Career Bridge.** This public, integrated online job search system was developed by the Washington State Workforce Investment Board. The website (www.careerbridge.wa.gov) linked to O*NET codes, labor market information, the state’s approved ETPL, and sources of financial aid.

- **Labor market information.** In addition to lists of job openings, study local areas also provided aggregate labor market information, which included information about the aggregate number of job openings and average wages by occupation and/or industry in the state or local area.
- **Job search tools.** Most study local areas also provided online resume templates and resume-creation software. In addition, they provided information about effective job searching via websites or videos.
- **Career exploration tools.** Study local areas frequently offered online career exploration tools. The goal of these tools was to assist customers in identifying careers that matched their interests and aptitudes and the education and training they needed to progress along the chosen career pathway. These tools included the O*NET Career Exploration and Interest Profiler tools (www.onetonline.org), CareerScope, Career Ability Placement Survey (CAPS), the Career Exploration Inventory, the Career Occupational Preference System (COPS), Holland’s Self-Directed Search, and the Job Search Attitude Inventory. Box III.3 provides examples of other career exploration tools available in one study local area.

Box III.3. An example of self-service career exploration and self-assessment offerings

Resource room customers of the First Coast (Florida) local area could use both state and local area tools to guide their self-assessment and career exploration activities. The state of Florida's Employ Florida Marketplace website had a dedicated section called Career Services that included several tools. The website's "Match Your Skills" feature helped customers identify their skills and match them with a career or occupation. Another feature of this website, called "Match Your Interests and Work Values," asked a series of questions to help customers match their abilities, interests, and work values with specific careers or occupations. The "Match Your Occupation" feature helped customers find occupations that required knowledge, skills, abilities, work environments, and work activities that were similar to their current or previous occupations.

- **Online skills instruction.** In many study local areas, customers could access software programs that provided online instruction or opportunities to practice specific workplace skills. For example, software packages offering typing instruction, practice, and assessment, and free tutorials on the use of Microsoft Office products were commonly available. Box III.4 describes a particularly wide selection of online instructional tools available in one study local area.
- **Basic skills assessments.** Although more frequently offered as an intensive service, basic skills assessments were offered to all AJC customers as a core service in 8 of the 28 study local areas. One of the most frequently available basic skills assessments was the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE). Specific scores on the TABE are required for admittance to many training programs. WorkKeys was another frequently offered basic skills assessment. Customers who score high enough on WorkKeys can obtain a National Career Readiness Certificate, a credential recognized by many employers. Some resource rooms also offered access to online programs that helped customers prepare for these assessments.

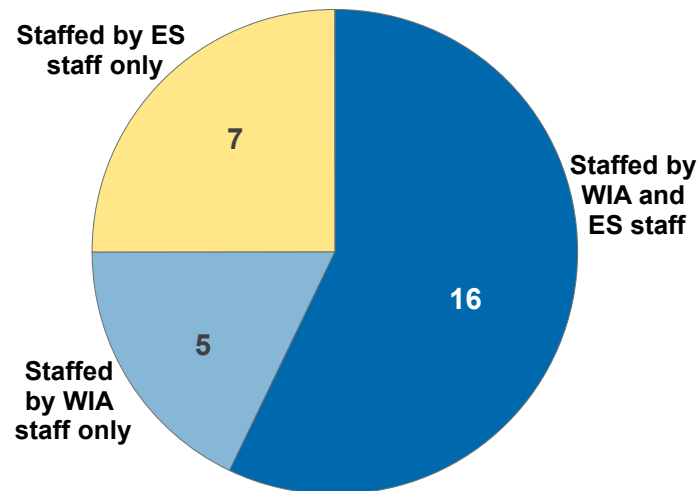
Box III.4. An example of online skills instruction

ResCare Inc., the AJC operator in the New Orleans (Louisiana) local area, developed its own suite of online customer tools, referred to as its "academy." Customers could access the academy from the AJC's resource room or their home computers. Among the free courses available online through the academy were basic office skills, leadership and management, programming and web development, finance and accounting, and healthcare compliance and safety.

Staff assistance. Respondents from about half of the study local areas said that they offered relatively little staff assistance to resource room customers. Some of these study local areas set limits on either the length of time a staff member could spend with an individual customer or the types of support that could be provided. For example, some study local areas specified that staff members provide only general information about available services. The policy in one local area was that a resource room staff member should not spend more than 10 minutes with any one customer. In contrast, respondents from some other study local areas indicated that a staff member might occasionally spend an hour or more with a customer in the resource room and that there was no limit on the time staff spent with resource room customers.

Although there was some variability across AJCs within the study local areas, ES staff members typically took primary responsibility for staffing shared resource rooms in seven study local areas, and WIA staff members took primary responsibility for the shared resource rooms in five study local areas (Figure III.2). In the remaining 16 study local areas, ES and WIA staff both staffed the resource rooms, with occasional assistance provided by staff members, interns, or volunteers from other partner programs such as SCSEP.

Figure III.2. Resource room staffing arrangements used in the 28 study local areas



Source: WIA Gold Standard Evaluation qualitative data collection, 2012–2013.

Administrators and staff in several study local areas noted that the number of staff members available to assist customers in the resource rooms was not sufficient to meet the demand for assistance. Staff members in these areas mentioned that the lack of staff members available to work the resource rooms resulted in stress for staff and frustration for customers. The problem of insufficient staff was exacerbated by the increased volume of customers that AJCs experienced in the face of the high unemployment rates described in Chapter II. And as discussed above, fewer ES staff members were available to deliver core services to AJC customers because they were needed to provide services to a growing number of long-term UI recipients.

Core workshops

Twenty-six of the 28 study local areas offered one or more core workshops in at least some AJCs. Sixteen study local areas offered workshops that were considered intensive services. (Chapter IV discusses these intensive services workshops.) Of the 26 study local areas that offered core workshops, 15 also offered intensive-services workshops. Of the two study local areas that did not offer core workshops, one offered only intensive-services workshops, and the other offered no workshops.

In most study local areas, the menu of core workshops was developed and scheduled by the AJC and its program partners (usually WIA and ES) and varied by AJC. In a few local areas, all

comprehensive AJCs offered a standardized set of core workshops, sometimes as a result of state mandates.

Eligibility for and requirements to attend core workshops. All AJC customers were eligible to attend a core workshop, and some were required to attend to receive intensive services or to continue to receive other assistance. Study local areas usually required pre-registration to ensure there was sufficient space and handout materials. Two study local areas—Waukesha-Ozaukee-Washington Counties (Wisconsin) and Lower Savannah (South Carolina)—required all customers interested in intensive or training services to participate in a workshop before they were deemed eligible for intensive services. According to AJC staff, the prescribed job search workshop provided foundational skills to guide customers’ job search. In some study local areas, the SNAP, TANF, and/or UI programs required their customers to participate in specific core workshops at the AJC. For example, the workshop required for UI claimants receiving extended benefits introduced participants to the resources available within the AJC and their requirements for conducting job search to maintain their eligibility for the extended benefits.

Topics covered by core workshops. The core workshops in the study local areas covered a range of topics. Many workshops discussed job search skills, such as preparing resumes, applying for a job, networking, and using social media to look for a job, as well as interviewing skills. Other core workshops covered an introduction to computers, self-assessment and goal setting, financial management, using career and labor market information, handling job loss, stress management, conflict resolution, and job retention skills. Some workshops provided training in basic software applications and how to use online tools available in the resource rooms. Some of this training involved practice time in a computer lab with staff support. Ten study local areas offered ongoing job clubs facilitated by an AJC staff person, in which job seekers met regularly as a group.

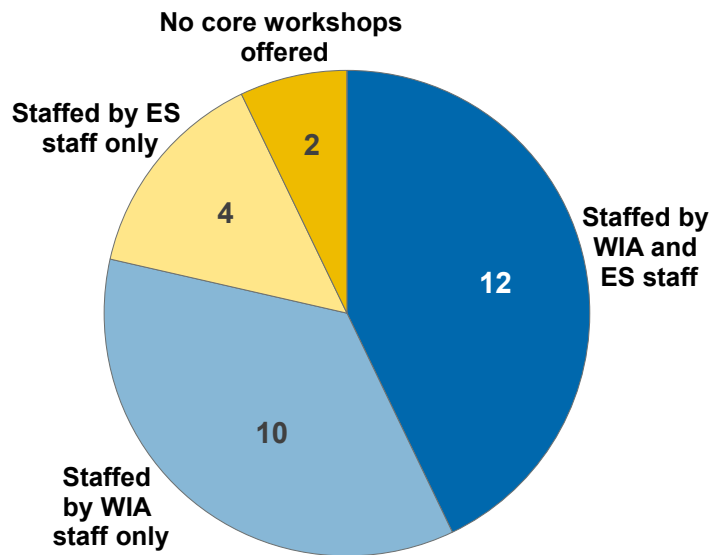
Length and frequency of core workshops. Core workshops ranged from one to four hours in length. Depending on AJC staffing, customer demand, and the preferred class size, workshops on a particular topic were scheduled at any given AJC several times a week, weekly, or monthly. Although some AJCs offered no workshops, others offered up to 20 per week. In addition to single-session workshops, several study local areas also offered workshop series. At least four study local areas packaged their job search training workshops into sequences intended but not required to be completed in order.

Staff interaction. Depending on the topic, and the workshop delivery style adopted by a workshop facilitator, workshops varied in the amount of interaction that occurred between facilitators and participants. Workshops in some AJCs used a lecture format, with time made available for questions and answers. Other AJCs held at least some workshops that allowed for more interaction between customers and workshop leaders. For example, in one study local area, an AJC operator provided a resume review workshop in which participants received one-on-one assistance in developing their resumes.

Facilitators. The study local areas also varied in which programs staffed the core workshops (Figure III.3). In 12 study local areas, WIA and ES staff members divided responsibility for the facilitation of core workshops—WIA and ES staff members either took turns facilitating workshops, or ES staff took responsibility for some workshops and WIA staff

for others. In 10 study local areas, WIA staff facilitated all core workshops, and in 4 study local areas, ES staff members facilitated all core workshops. In AJCs that offered workshops more frequently, a separate staff person was sometimes hired as a full-time or part-time workshop facilitator. In AJCs that offered fewer workshops, generally ES or WIA staff members were responsible for facilitating workshops.

Figure III.3. Staff used to facilitate core workshops in the 28 study local areas



Source: WIA Gold Standard Evaluation qualitative data collection, 2012–2013.

Other staff assistance available to core customers

Core customers across the study local areas could receive additional staff assistance before being assessed for intensive services. For example, in the eight study local areas that adopted the enhanced-intake approach described above, all new AJC customers participated in an initial one-on-one assessment with an AJC staff member (usually an ES or WIA staff member) soon after they arrived at the AJC. This assessment—considered a staff-assisted core service—usually took between 5 and 30 minutes depending on the local area and the customers’ background. Staff assistance could also be provided upon request, such as the assistance provided within the resource room or interactions customers might have with facilitators in core workshops. Depending on the local area, this staff assistance could be provided by staff from ES, WIA, or both programs.

This page has been left blank for double-sided copying.

IV. INTENSIVE SERVICES

WIA intended that customers who needed more assistance in finding a job than was provided through core services alone be offered the next tier of services, intensive services. Unlike core services, intensive services provided through the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs typically featured substantial staff involvement, ongoing relationships between customers and staff members, and individualized service plans.

Participants in the WIA Gold Standard Evaluation were randomly assigned just after they were found eligible for intensive services but before they received those services. Customers assigned to the core-and-intensive and full-WIA groups were eligible to receive intensive services; those assigned to the core group were not eligible for intensive services.

Individualized assistance by a career counselor was the defining feature of intensive services.⁵ Typically, once customers were found eligible for intensive services, they underwent testing and assessment, and then worked with a career counselor to develop a customized service plan. Customers seeking a job without training received staff assistance in finalizing their resume, advice on interviewing, and assistance using the state's job bank. Customers who were interested in training worked with a career counselor first to determine their eligibility for training and then to choose an appropriate training program. To ensure that their choice was well informed, customers were often required to research multiple occupations and training programs. Career counselors also provided customers with ongoing services that included regular meetings, referrals, and ongoing counseling. Some study local areas offered work experience, internships, and prevocational training courses, but most did not.

In all study local areas, intensive services did not vary by whether they were funded by the Adult or Dislocated Worker program. All study local areas targeted the intensive services they offered customers to the customers' needs, and on average adult program customers had different needs than dislocated worker program customers. However, in all study local areas, a customer with the same characteristics would have been offered almost identical intensive services irrespective of whether these services were funded by the Adult or Dislocated Worker program.

Despite these similarities, study local areas varied in some aspects of their intensive services offerings. One key difference was whether the study local area offered WIA intensive services to a broad range of customers or offered them primarily to those customers interested in training. In addition to providing intensive services to customers interested in training, 18 of the 28 study local areas offered intensive services for customers who needed assistance looking for a job but were not interested in or eligible for training. The remaining 10 study local areas offered intensive services primarily to customers interested or participating in training.

⁵ Following the terminology used by many study local areas, we refer to the staff members responsible for working one-on-one with customers to provide intensive services as "career counselors."

The study local areas differed in which services they defined as “intensive” and which they defined as “core.” For example, some study local areas offered workshops as an intensive service, whereas others treated similar workshops as a core service. Some study local areas called in-depth one-on-one job search assistance provided to customers a “staff-assisted core” service, while the same service in another study local area was counted as an intensive service. For the study, as much as possible, we standardized the definition of “intensive services” as services that involved significant one-on-one interaction with staff, whether or not the local area recorded the services as intensive (Mastri et al. 2015).

This chapter describes the intensive services offered by the local areas participating in the study. It first describes how study local areas took different approaches to offering intensive services. It then describes the customers who were offered intensive services across the study local areas, the types of intensive services offered, and how service provision varied across customers and local areas. Finally, it describes the program affiliation and qualifications of the career counselors in the study local areas.

Approach to offering intensive services

All study local areas offered WIA intensive services, but they fell into two groups depending on the extent to which these services were offered to customers not interested in or eligible for training (Table IV.1):

- **Study local areas that offered intensive services to a broad set of customers.** About two-thirds of the study local areas (18 of the 28) reported that they offered intensive services to a broad set of customers. This set included customers who needed assistance finding a job but who were not interested in or eligible for training as well as customers who were interested in training.
- **Study local areas that primarily offered intensive services tied to training.** About one-third of the study local areas (10 of the 28) reported that they focused their WIA intensive services primarily on assisting customers who were interested in training and did not generally offer these services to customers not interested in training. Two study local areas—Atlanta Region (Georgia) and First Coast (Florida)—offered WIA intensive services almost exclusively to customers interested in training. Another eight study local areas offered intensive services mainly to customers interested in training but also assisted customers not interested in training if the assistance was requested. Customers who were not interested in or eligible for training could access core services, ES services, or services offered by other programs in the AJC.

Chapter V discusses the rationale given by administrators in the study local areas for whether they provided intensive services to a broad set of customers or focused these services on assisting customers interested in training.

Table IV.1. Study local areas by their approach to offering customers intensive services

Study local area	Offered intensive services to:	
	A broad range of customers	Customers primarily interested in training
Atlanta Region (Georgia)		X
Capital Region (New York)	X	
Central Pennsylvania	X	
Central Region (Missouri)		X
Chautauqua County (New York)		X
Chicago (Illinois)	X	
East Tennessee	X	
Essex County (New Jersey)		X
First Coast (Florida)		X
Fresno County (California)	X	
Gulf Coast (Texas)		X
Indianapolis (Indiana)	X	
Louisville (Kentucky)	X	
Lower Savannah (South Carolina)	X	
Muskegon (Michigan)	X	
New Orleans (Louisiana)	X	
New York City	X	
North Central Texas		X
Northwest Pennsylvania	X	
Sacramento (California)	X	
Santee-Lynches (South Carolina)	X	
Seattle-King County (Washington)		X
South Dakota	X	
South Plains (Texas)		X
Southeast Michigan		X
Southwest Corner Pennsylvania	X	
Twin Districts (Mississippi)	X	
Waukesha-Ozaukee-Washington Counties (Wisconsin)	X	

Source: WIA Gold Standard Evaluation qualitative data collection, 2012–2013.

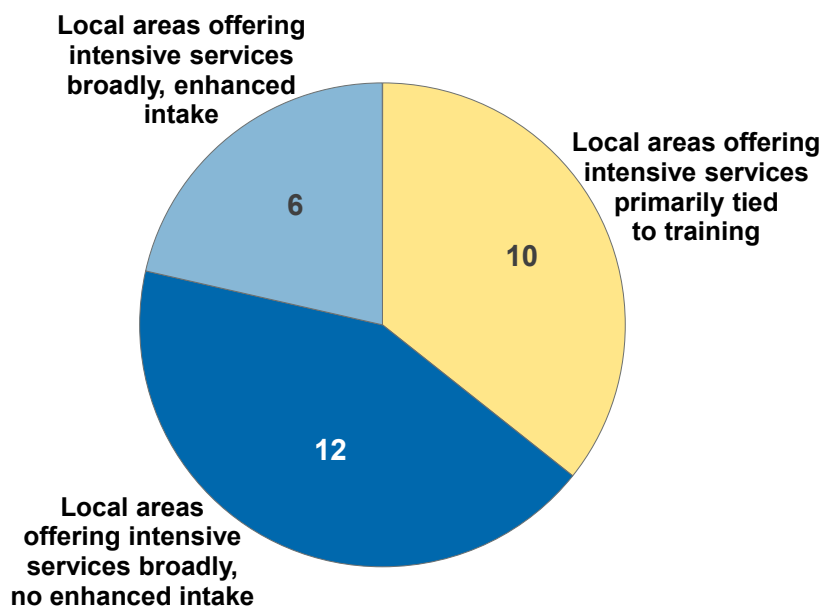
Customers offered intensive services

The customers who were offered intensive services varied depending on whether the local area offered intensive services to a broad range of customers and how it determined which customers would benefit most from the services. We identified three groups of study local areas by the local area’s approach to offering WIA intensive services and serving new AJC customers (Figure IV.1):

1. **Offered intensive services to a broad range of customers but did not conduct an enhanced intake.** In these 12 study local areas, new AJC customers were typically directed to use services in the resource room. Customers were offered intensive services but only after they had used the resource room and asked for additional assistance or been identified by resource-room staff as in need of additional assistance.

2. **Offered intensive services to a broad range of customers and an enhanced intake.** In these six study local areas, the staff members who conducted the enhanced intake identified new AJC customers deemed likely to benefit from intensive services or training. These customers would be directed to career counselors.
3. **Offered intensive services primarily tied to training.** In the 10 study local areas that offered intensive services primarily in conjunction with training, eligibility for intensive services was dependent on eligibility for training, irrespective of how the local area served new AJC customers. Customers deemed unlikely to succeed at training, because of low basic skills, for example, were ineligible for training and hence generally ineligible for intensive services provided by WIA.

Figure IV.1. Study local areas' approaches to identifying customers interested in WIA intensive services



Source: WIA Gold Standard Evaluation qualitative data collection, 2012–2013.

WIA gave local areas considerable flexibility to determine which customers were eligible for intensive services. Before receiving intensive services (as well as staff-assisted core and training services), the Act required that all customers show documentation that they could legally work in the United States and that males had registered for the Selective Service. In addition to these basic requirements, the Act required that local areas offer intensive services only to customers who (1) had received a core service before receiving intensive services and (2) were “in need” of more intensive services to obtain or retain employment. The requirement to have received a core service was easily met; it could be satisfied by the interaction with a greeter at the AJC or even the interview that determined eligibility for intensive services. The criterion “in need” of intensive services allowed for a wide variation in interpretation by the local areas.

Most study local areas considered customers ineligible for intensive services if customers had one or more significant challenges to successfully obtaining a job. For example, WIA staff might not offer intensive services to customers who were found—either during the initial intake interview or through interactions in other core services—to:

- Lack a high school diploma or GED certificate
- Have poor basic skills or learning disabilities
- Lack adequate housing
- Have a current substance abuse problem
- Have a history of criminal activity

Instead, these customers were often referred to other organizations—such as adult learning centers, adult education providers, or substance abuse programs—or to other programs at the AJC to address these challenges.

Administrators and staff in many study local areas reported that a key criterion for determining whether customers were likely to benefit from services, and hence eligible for intensive services, was their motivation to find a job (either with or without training). One approach to determining customers' motivation was to observe whether they completed a set of activities required of customers before they were deemed eligible for intensive services. Three study local areas established formal policies that required activities of all customers before they were determined eligible for intensive services. Two of these local areas required customers to attend specific workshops, and the third required customers to spend at least two weeks actively looking for a job before they were eligible to receive intensive services. WIA staff members at some other study local areas reported that they sometimes asked customers whose motivation appeared in doubt to complete “homework.” For example, they might require customers to do further work on a resume, conduct additional job search, or attend a specific workshop. Customers who did not complete these activities were viewed as insufficiently motivated to obtain employment, and hence not offered WIA-funded intensive services. Instead, these customers were referred to core or ES services. Box IV.1 provides an example of the types of homework activities required in one study local area.

WIA stipulated that, when Adult program funds were limited, priority for intensive (and training) services should be given to recipients of public assistance and other low-income customers (WIA Section 134(d)(4)(E)). To operationalize this process, some study local areas required that recipients of Adult program funds meet a family income threshold; others required that customers be unemployed or, if employed, earned an hourly wage below a specified threshold.

Box IV.1. Determination of intensive-services eligibility in one study local area

In a typical AJC in Chicago (Illinois), customers interested in job search assistance or training met one-on-one with career counselors. Using a checklist, career counselors asked customers to bring in documentation of their social security number, address, income, and authorization to work legally in the United States.

Career counselors assigned customers tasks to complete as “homework.” These tasks varied by customer, but could include:

- Taking the TABE
- Researching and visiting potential employers
- Attending a job club or other workshops
- Examining labor market information
- Submitting a weekly log of job applications

These activities were intended to ensure that the customers had a realistic understanding of the job market, the industry in which they wished to work, and the limitations of their previous experience or ability. Customers who successfully completed these assignments by a specified deadline (usually from one to three weeks depending on the nature of the task and the counselor) and achieved a TABE score of achievement at the 8th grade or higher level were deemed eligible to receive intensive services.

One AJC required customers interested in intensive services to also attend a series of job readiness workshops before meeting with the counselor. This four-day workshop series typically covered job search skills, resume writing, interviewing techniques, and basic computer skills.

Intensive service offerings

The WIA intensive services offered in the study local areas fall into four broad categories: (1) career and service receipt planning, (2) job search assistance, (3) case management, and (4) skill-building activities.⁶

Career and service receipt planning

In all 28 study local areas, career counselors provided intensive-services customers with individualized career planning that included (1) assessing customers’ skills and interests, and suitability for various career options; (2) creating service plans tailored to the customers’ needs; and (3) for customers interested in training, determining eligibility for training and developing a training plan.

Assessments. All study local areas offered basic skills tests or referred customers to a provider of these tests (such as a community college). The tests typically assessed skills in math, reading, and workplace graphics (referred to as locating information). The results of the tests

⁶ One study local area viewed career planning and case management as “staff-assisted core” services. For the study, we asked that the study local area randomly assign customers after they were determined eligible for career planning and not offer these staff-assisted core services to core group customers.

were used to assess whether customers possessed the skill levels required for different occupations and to successfully complete training. The most frequently used tests were the TABE and WorkKeys. The TABE was frequently required by training providers to determine whether customers would succeed in training. Scores on WorkKeys were often used by employers to assess basic skills. Other tests of basic skills offered by study local areas included Prove It!, Aztec, and Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS).

Most study local areas also offered tests to assess occupational aptitudes and interests. CareerScope was the most frequently used aptitude and interest test. Other aptitude and interest tests offered included Choices Planner, Countdown, Discovery, and the System for Assessment and Group Evaluation (SAGE).

In most study local areas, these basic skills and aptitude and interest tests were offered only to intensive services customers. Often, career counselors asked these customers to take these tests before they conducted the comprehensive assessment (discussed below). However, in eight study local areas, some of these tests were offered to all customers and considered a core service. In all study local areas, even in the eight study local areas that offered the tests as core services, career counselors' discussion of the test results with customers was considered an intensive service.

In all study local areas, career counselors conducted one-on-one comprehensive assessments with intensive services customers. Career counselors typically began the assessment by asking customers about their work history, medical history, family and marital status, and housing. They then asked about any potential barriers to training or employment, such as learning disabilities, mental health issues, ex-offender status, or substance abuse. They also discussed with customers the results of the customers' basic skills and interest and aptitude tests, their career goals, and training or other services that could support those goals.

Career counselors typically conducted the comprehensive assessments during the first or second meeting with customers. According to interviewed career counselors, the assessment varied in length from less than 30 minutes to two hours, depending on the customer. For example, counselors took more time with customers facing multiple barriers to employment, contemplating a career change, or unsure about their career goals and options.

Career and service receipt plans. Based on the information collected through the tests and assessments, career counselors in all but one study local area worked with customers to develop an Individual Employment Plan (IEP). The IEP documented customers' career and training goals, the agreed-upon strategies to meet the goals, and the services needed for success. Often, it attached time lines and interim milestones to each of the listed strategies. IEPs also often contained information on employment and/or training barriers, test and assessment scores, employment history, educational history, skills and abilities, and services received. For customers found eligible for training, the IEP also included the training plan. Box IV.2 describes the development of an IEP by a career counselor and a customer whose meeting we observed during a visit to one study local area.

Box IV.2. An example of the steps involved in developing an IEP

During a customer's first career planning session, the career counselor completed the online screens required to build the customer's electronic IEP. At the beginning of the meeting, the career counselor presented the customer with results from the PESCO assessment (a basic skills test the customer had taken before the meeting). The customer scored above average in locating information, math, and language. The career counselor then asked the customer about her employment history and learned that she had been employed as a caseworker in welfare services for a nonprofit agency. He also learned that the customer did not have a GED, but was planning to take the test soon. Other employment barriers were identified, including lack of a driver license and a small tattoo on the customer's arm that the career counselor cited as potentially problematic for some employers.

Next, the career counselor asked about the customer's immediate and long-term goals. In the short term, the customer's main goal was to find an office job. She was willing to consider training, but only after obtaining a stable job and "getting settled." Based on the assessment, the career counselor thought the customer would be well suited for a job requiring attention to detail and strong "people skills." The career counselor mentioned other options, such as a career in the health industry. Knowing that the customer was interested in obtaining a job quickly, the career counselor accessed the O*NET website and demonstrated how to use it to search for specific occupations. The career counselor also mentioned that the customer's resume (which he had reviewed before the meeting) was too cluttered and might need revising to make it easier to read.

Finally, the career counselor mentioned the types of supportive services that might be available, including funds for removing the tattoo from her arm. He printed a copy of the IEP for the customer to keep, and emphasized that it was important for the customer to keep in regular contact. The career counselor scheduled a meeting for the following week between the customer and the AJC staff member responsible for working with intensive-services customers on the job search process.

In most study local areas, career counselors reported that IEPs were updated every time customers' goals or service plan changed significantly, and in a few study local areas, changes were recorded as frequently as monthly or during every meeting. However, career counselors from several study local areas indicated that IEPs were rarely updated after completion.

Fifteen of the 27 study local areas developed and stored IEPs electronically in the local or state management information system. The remaining study local areas used paper records. Irrespective of how the IEPs were stored, customers were provided a hard copy of their IEPs. Career counselors noted that, by making case files more accessible and consolidating information from multiple sources, electronic record keeping allowed them to use their time more efficiently.

Training plan. In all study local areas, career counselors worked with customers interested in training to determine their eligibility and suitability for training and their choice of training program. While Chapter V provides more detail about the eligibility criteria for training and the restrictions on the customers' choice of training program, we describe below how career counselors worked with customers interested in training, an intensive service. The process usually involved at least two one-on-one meetings between the career counselors and customers. Customers were also required to complete several activities before each meeting. The career counselors' assistance through this process included:

-
- **Directing customers to take basic skills tests and aptitude and interest tests.** Some study local areas required all customers interested in training to score above a threshold on a basic skills tests before the local area would fund their training. In addition, admittance to some training programs required customers to score above a threshold on a basic skills test. Customers unsure of which occupation to train for were directed to take an occupational aptitude and interest test.
 - **Assisting customers in finding alternative sources of funding.** Career counselors assisted customers interested in an ITA in applying for Pell grants or state or local training grants.
 - **Assisting customers in selecting an occupation.** Career counselors worked with customers to select an occupation that the customers were interested in, was appropriate for their skills and experience, and for which there were available jobs. This process involved determining whether the occupation was on a list of “in-demand” occupations developed by the state or local area and whether it met any other criteria for “in-demand” occupations set by the study local area. Many study local areas also required customers to research their chosen occupation, identifying prevailing wages, typical job duties, work hours, and work site conditions. Customers typically used labor market information and job postings to collect this information. They were also directed to use O*NET (www.onetonline.org)—a free online database that provides detailed information about occupations, including the activities involved, the skills and education required, and wages and employment growth. A few study local areas required customers to collect information about occupations through interviews with employers or job shadowing.
 - **Assisting customers in selecting a training program.** Career counselors worked with customers who were eligible to receive an ITA to select a specific training program and provider. At a minimum, the training program needed to be listed on the ETPL. Seventeen of the 28 study local areas required, and other study local areas encouraged, customers to collect information—such as cost, length, financial aid availability, and post-training job-placement rates—on at least three training programs. Much of this research could be conducted online, via email, or by telephone. Four study local areas required customers to visit the training provider in person.

Job search assistance

Job search assistance offered as an intensive service and provided by career counselors was typically more involved and customized than the assistance provided as a core service by staff in the resource room. In 11 study local areas, in addition to the career counselors, other staff members, typically those who worked with employers on developing job orders, assisted customers with their job search.

The job search assistance typically included:

- **Resume review.** Career counselors typically reviewed customers’ resumes and offered advice on how customers could improve and/or tailor them to specific job opportunities. Some AJCs also offered assistance formatting resumes.
- **Help developing customized job searches.** Career counselors assisted customers with using the state job bank and other job search engines to identify job openings that matched

the customers' characteristics, aptitudes, and career goals. Typically, career counselors demonstrated how to conduct a customized job search and suggested appropriate search criteria.

- **Assistance with interviewing skills.** Career counselors also provided advice on interviewing or suggested that customers attend a workshop on interviewing. In addition, some study local areas offered customers the opportunity to receive feedback on mock interviews with the career counselor or a staff member in the AJC's business services unit.

Box IV.3 provides an example of in-depth job search assistance services offered by one study local area.

Box IV.3. Job search assistance offered in one study local area

In Fresno County (California), after the IEP was completed, customers worked with career counselors (known as employment readiness specialists) to develop their resumes and improve their interviewing skills. In one AJC, all customers' resumes were sent to a specialized staff member for review. The career counselors also routinely conducted mock interviews with customers. Customers then met with a job developer (called a business account specialist), who evaluated customers on their resume and interviewing skills. Customers viewed as ready to search for a job were issued a work readiness certificate and provided information about suitable job openings by the job developer.

Case management

Career counselors conducted case management while customers participated in training and/or searched for employment. Case management services typically entailed (1) regularly checking in with customers to assess their progress and offer support and (2) making referrals to service providers or agencies.

Regular check-ins with customers. Once the IEP and training plan were approved, career counselors attempted regular check-ins with customers. (Once customers became employed, career counselors or other staff conducted follow-up calls, as described in Chapter VI.) The nature and frequency of these check-ins varied by whether the customer was looking for a job or participating in training.

Typically, career counselors scheduled check-in meetings with customers who were not in training at least once every two weeks and sometimes as often as twice a week. The meetings were frequently conducted in person and involved job search assistance (as described above). The meetings continued until customers found a job or exited the WIA Adult or Dislocated Worker program.

In contrast, the check-ins with customers participating in training were less frequent and typically shorter. In most study local areas, career counselors attempted to check in with customers in training once per month. Additional check-ins were sometimes triggered by the career counselors' receipt of information on grades or attendance from the training program. Career counselors typically had more contact with customers who received supportive services, because these customers were required to submit documentation for expenses. The check-ins typically happened by telephone or email but sometimes occurred in person. Check-in calls

covered training progress (grades and attendance), challenges, and steps to overcome these challenges and were typically short. As one career counselor described to site visitors, training customers “don’t require that much maintenance... We just check in to make sure that they are getting the help that they need.” The check-in meetings continued until the customers finished training and found a job.

Referrals for additional services. Career counselors frequently referred customers to services offered by other agencies in the community. Most frequently, these services helped customers participate in the activities outlined in their IEPs. Although WIA allowed the provision of funding for a limited set of supportive services—such as assistance for training-related expenses, transportation, and child care, as described in Chapter VI—WIA funding did not routinely cover many of the needs experienced by customers.

Career counselors referred intensive-service customers for a range of services provided by other programs to help address their needs. The types of referrals often made were for assistance with utility bills, food, housing, clothing, and physical and mental health care. These services were offered by organizations such as community food banks, community action agencies, community health networks, and local public assistance offices (for enrollment in TANF, SNAP, and other assistance programs).

Most referrals consisted of career counselors providing information to customers about where to go for needed services without any follow up with the referred agency. Career counselors advised customers about which agency to call and sometimes provided informational leaflets about the referred agency. Career counselors in a few study local areas indicated that they sometimes directly contacted the agency to which the referral was made, either to set up an initial meeting for the customer or to inquire about the availability of program slots. However, these situations were the exceptions. For the most part, career counselors did not follow up with customers to inquire about the customers’ receipt of the services for which the customers were referred.

Skill-building activities

Intensive services also helped customers develop work skills. These services were offered through (1) workshops, (2) work experience and internship programs, and (3) prevocational training.

Intensive services workshops. In addition to core workshops, 16 study local areas offered at least some workshops that they counted as intensive services and offered only to customers found eligible for intensive services rather than all AJC customers. One study local area offered workshops only as an intensive service. Respondents from several of the study local areas that reported offering both core and intensive workshops noted that workshops offered at the intensive level were longer, provided more detailed attention to a topic, had smaller class sizes, provided more one-on-one interaction between customers and staff members, and/or were led by WIA career counselors rather than ES staff members. However, data collected as part of our cost study suggest few differences in intensity between workshops designated as intensive and those designated as core other than restrictions on who could attend. For example, one study local area offered a three-day workshop that it classified as a staff-assisted core service because it was available for all AJC customers.

Intensive services workshops generally fell into one of two categories: (1) those focused on job search and (2) those that developed skills used in employment. Job search workshops covered topics such as identifying appropriate job openings, applying for jobs, improving interviewing skills, and developing resumes. Although most study local areas classified job clubs as core services, two study local areas classified their job clubs as an intensive service. (Box IV.4 describes an intensive-services job club in one study local area.) Some study local areas offered a few workshops focused on developing skills used in employment. For example, one local area offered workshops on strategic planning and conflict resolution.

Box IV.4. An example of an intensive-services job club

Southeast Michigan offered job clubs as an intensive service. These clubs met weekly at the AJC, were limited to 20 participants, and were facilitated by a WIA business service representative, a staff member responsible for developing relationships with area employers. The business service representative brought information about current job openings and upcoming job fairs and assisted job club participants with job applications. Topics covered in the job club were driven by customer needs but included the use of job search tools, community resources, and barriers to employment. Employers were sometimes invited as guest speakers.

Work experience and internships. Only five study local areas regularly offered work experience or internships to a few WIA adult and dislocated worker customers. Respondents indicated that internships and work experience programs were generally paid, and the duration of assignments varied from 24 hours to six months. In at least one study local area, internships were typically provided to customers in training programs that did not include an internship and who lacked work experience in their training fields. These internships were developed because the local area staff perceived that for some occupations, customers without work experience often had difficulty finding employment even after receiving training.

Prevocational training. Five study local areas offered short prevocational training programs funded by WIA at the AJCs. They varied in their content and included programs to improve general work skills; programs focused on building computer skills; and short programs to develop occupational skills, such as preparation for the Certified Public Accountant examination.

Staffing intensive services

In all 28 study local areas, nearly all WIA intensive services were provided by WIA-funded career counselors. However, some intensive services were provided by ES staff or by specialized WIA staff members who did not have case management responsibilities. Frequently, specialized staff without case management responsibilities administered tests (such as the TABE or WorkKeys), provided intensive service workshops, and delivered job development and placement services. Six study local areas had different career counselors specialized in working with customers interested in and eligible for training and those not interested in or eligible for training. The staff who provided job development and placement services were sometimes WIA career counselors, sometimes specialized WIA-funded staff who did not have case management responsibilities, and sometimes, though less frequently, ES-funded staff members.

In most study local areas, the LWIB or the AJC operators established minimum educational levels for WIA career counselors. The most frequently required educational level was a bachelor's degree, but some local areas required a high school diploma, an associate's degree, a workforce development certification, or a passing grade on a civil service examination. In most study local areas that did not institute any specific requirements, a bachelor's degree was preferred. Of the WIA career counselors we interviewed for the study (who were not selected to be representative), about three-quarters had at least a bachelor's degree, and about one-eighth had a graduate degree.

Career counselors in many study local areas noted that high caseloads limited the amount of time they could spend with each customer. Although caseloads varied, career counselors typically oversaw 50 to 100 cases. Caseloads were typically higher in study local areas that did not offer intensive services to a broad range of customers but focused on participants in training. Administrators in several study local areas reported reducing the number of career counselors as a result of the funding cuts.

This page has been left blank for double-sided copying.

V. TRAINING SERVICES

Training services were the last of the three tiers of services offered by the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. They were offered only to customers who had received services in the other tiers—core and intensive services—but were unable to find a job that led to self-sufficiency. WIA allowed local areas to offer occupational skills training, upgrading, or retraining; adult basic education combined with other training services; and entrepreneurial training. It also allowed for OJT and customized training. To maximize training customers' choice, WIA required most training services to be funded through an ITA. The ITA paid up to a specified amount for any training program of customers' choosing as long as it met certain guidelines.

In the WIA Gold Standard Evaluation, only customers randomly assigned to the full-WIA group were allowed to participate in training, but customers were not *required* to be offered, or participate in, training. The evaluation team instructed staff to approve training only for full-WIA customers who were interested in and determined eligible for training, just as they would have in the absence of the study. Customers assigned to the core and core-and-intensive groups were not permitted to participate in WIA-funded training.

All study local areas offered training, but the proportion of customers who received this final tier of WIA services varied significantly. Overall, we estimate that just less than one-third of all customers found eligible for intensive services and randomly assigned to the full-WIA group participated in WIA-funded training within about 15 months after random assignment. The training rate across the study local areas ranged from a low of 3 percent in one study local area to a high of 86 percent in another. This variation was primarily the result of state or local policies that affected the degree to which the local areas emphasized providing training services versus assisting customers in finding employment without training. Another factor was the availability of funding. As their funding for the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs declined, many study local areas reduced the number of customers receiving training services or reduced the amount paid for each trainee.

Beyond the federal requirements for training, local areas developed criteria and processes to determine eligibility for training that were the same for both the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. All study local areas typically had eligibility rules related to the characteristics of the customers, the occupation they wished to train for, and their chosen training program. Some study local areas allowed customers to participate in a range of training, while others narrowed customers' training options to those geared toward particularly high-growth occupations. In most study local areas, the training approval process was extensive; career counselors reported that these processes were designed at least in part to screen out customers who were either unable or insufficiently motivated to complete the requirements for training approval. The rationale for this approach was that customers who completed an extensive training approval process were more likely to complete their training program.

Across the study local areas, nearly all WIA training services were funded by ITAs and designed to develop customers' occupational skills. All study local areas capped the amount of their ITAs, although the maximum cap varied from \$2,000 to \$12,000 per customer. Many study local areas also established lower caps for a subset of their training programs. Most study local

areas offered OJT opportunities, but less than 5 percent of the customers in the full-WIA group participated in OJT. WIA funding for adult basic education, entrepreneurial training, customized training, and training provided to cohorts of customers through contracts with providers was infrequent. Study local areas did not offer different amounts or types of training services depending on whether the training was funded by the Adult or Dislocated Worker program.

This chapter describes the training services offered by the study local areas. First, it describes how the study local areas differed in the emphasis placed on training services over other employment services and the funding available for training. Next, it describes the requirements for customers to be eligible to receive WIA-funded training. Then, it provides an overview of the training types followed by a description of occupational skills training provided through ITAs, OJTs, and other methods. It ends with a discussion of how many study local areas exhausted training funds during the study and the implications of this exhaustion for customers.

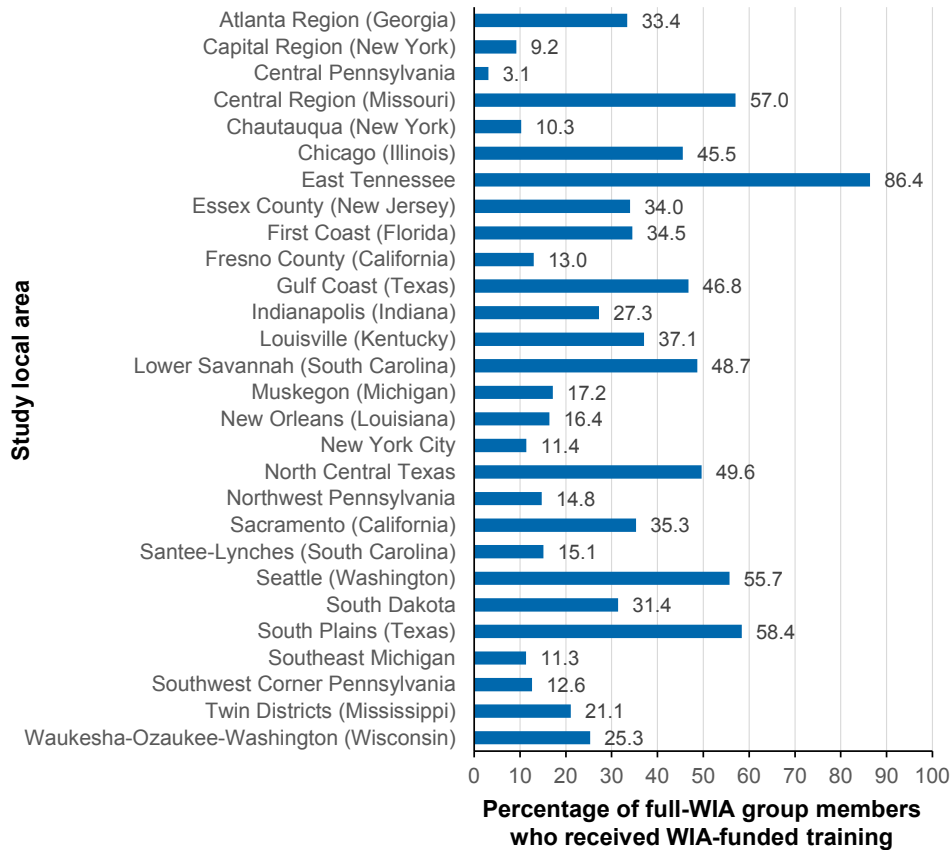
Emphasis on training services

Among customers who were found eligible for intensive services and then randomly assigned to the full-WIA group, we estimate that less than one-third (29 percent) received WIA-funded training during the 15 months after random assignment.⁷ Some customers found eligible for intensive services and assigned to the full-WIA group may not have been interested in participating in training and instead requested only intensive services to find a job. Other customers eligible for intensive services may have been determined unsuitable for training services or did not complete the steps required to be approved for training under the WIA Adult or Dislocated Worker program. Some study local areas may have had limited training funds when customers were randomly assigned and therefore could not offer training services to many otherwise eligible customers requesting them.

The percentage of full-WIA group customers who received training services varied considerably by local area (Figure V.1). In 11 of the 28 study local areas, less than 20 percent of the full-WIA group customers received training; in Central Pennsylvania, only 3 percent of customers received training. In four study local areas, more than 50 percent of full-WIA group customers participated in training.

⁷ This estimate is weighted to account for the probability that the local area was selected to participate in the study, the likelihood that the local area agreed to participate in the study, the probability the customer consented to participate in the study, and the rate of random assignment to the full-WIA group. It is not a precise measure of the percentage of full-WIA customers who received WIA-funded training, for two reasons. First, local areas are instructed to include any training recorded in a customer's IEP, whether or not it is WIA-funded, and so the estimate may overstate the proportion who participate in WIA-funded training. Second, a WIASRD record was identified for only 81 percent of the full-WIA group. To the extent that a WIASRD record may not have been identified because the customer's social security number on the study registration form and the WIASRD differed, this estimate would understate the participation in training. Some customers may also have moved to another local area and received WIA-funded training.

Figure V.1. Percentage of full-WIA group members who received WIA-funded training, by local area



Source: WIASRD data extracted between January 2014 and November 2014.

Note: These estimates are the weighted percentage of customers assigned to the full-WIA group who received training according to WIASRD extracts obtained for the study. The data are weighted to account for the probability of consenting to the study and the probability of assignment to the full-WIA group.

The variations in the percentage of full-WIA group customers who received training partly reflect policy decisions made by the states on the best use of WIA formula funds. In four study local areas—Chicago (Illinois), First Coast (Florida), Fresno County (California), and Sacramento (California)—the state specified the minimum percentage of formula-funded WIA funds that the local area had to spend on training in PY 2012: 40 percent in Illinois, 50 percent in Florida, and 15 percent in California (although California also required local areas to spend some of their non-formula funds on training). In the other 24 study local areas, the LWIB decided what proportion of the budget to focus on training.

When asked about their emphasis on training, administrators in many of the study local areas that had relatively high rates of training provided one or more explanations, including:

- Customers needed additional skills to become qualified for jobs that paid enough for self-sufficiency. Some also maintained that businesses in the local area needed more skilled workers, and training job seekers was one way to address that need.
- Many job seekers wanted training and would not go to AJCs if training was not offered. As evidence, administrators pointed to the reduction in the number of new customers when

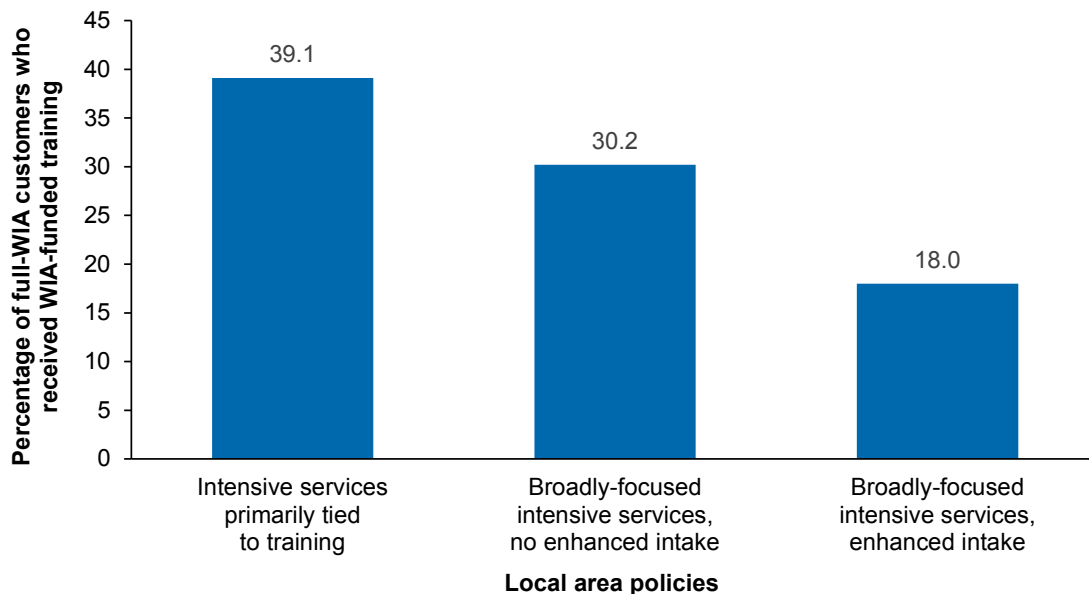
training funds were depleted. Administrators also noted that a significant number of customers were referred to the AJC by a training provider and came to the AJC specifically to access training funds.

- Other programs, such as ES, provided services similar to WIA core and intensive services, but WIA funding was one of the few available sources for training funds.

In contrast, some local administrators in study local areas that had low rates of training asserted that many customers did not need training to find employment, the cost of training per customer was high, and they could serve more customers in total if they offered fewer customers training.

The proportion of full-WIA group members who received training varies among study local areas according to their policies on offering intensive services and providing enhanced intake to new AJC customers (Figure V.2). Training rates were highest (39 percent, on average) in local areas that offered intensive services primarily tied to training. In local areas that offered intensive services more broadly, but in which new customers were required to use the resource room before requesting intensive services, the average training rate (30 percent) was similar to the training rate across the 28 study local areas. Training rates were the lowest (18 percent, on average) in local areas that offered intensive services broadly and conducted an enhanced intake of new customers.

Figure V.2. Percentage of full-WIA customers who received WIA-funded training by approach to offering intensive services and enhanced intake for all new AJC customers



Source: WIASRD data extracted between January 2014 and November 2014.

Note: These estimates are the weighted percentage of customers assigned to the full-WIA group who received training according to WIASRD extracts obtained for the study. The data are weighted to account for the probability of consenting to the study and the probability of assignment to the full-WIA group.

Significant reductions in funding for the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs over the past several years led many local areas to reduce their training budgets. In slightly more than half of the study local areas (15 of 28), local area administrators reported that they reduced the number of customers receiving training or the approved amount for training, for at least some period, during PYs 2011 to 2013. (See Kirby [2015] for more on the impacts of the funding cuts.) Two study local areas in Michigan depleted their formula training funds because the state's No Worker Left Behind program (which ended in July 2010) provided multi-year funding to a broader set of customers than would normally have been found eligible for training funds. Thus, a significant portion of formula training funds available during the WIA Gold Standard Evaluation had already been committed to customers funded under the state program.

Eligibility for training

To be approved for training, WIA required customers to: (1) be assessed as unable to “obtain or retain employment” through intensive services alone; (2) possess the skills and qualifications necessary to successfully participate in the training program they selected; (3) select training connected to employment opportunities in the local area or in another area in which the customer is willing to relocate; and (4) be unable to obtain other grant assistance to pay for the training (WIA Section 134(d)(4)).

Training is not an entitlement; WIA did not require the local areas to offer training to all the customers who met these criteria. To target funds to those who were expected to benefit most from training, study local areas typically added criteria to each of these four broad federal requirements and required that customers conduct several detailed steps to explore their training options before being approved for training. These additional eligibility criteria fell into six categories:

1. **Ability to obtain or retain employment through intensive services.** During their first interview, counselors often assessed whether customers met this requirement using information on basic skills test results, education background, and work experience. In some study local areas—especially those that provided intensive services to a broad range of customers—the career counselor would assist some customers with job search first, and discuss training with customers only if this search was unsuccessful.
2. **Possession of the skills and qualifications necessary to succeed in training.** Nearly all study local areas required that all customers interested in training score above a minimum on a basic skills assessment, such as the TABE or WorkKeys. Typically, customers were required to score at an 8th or 9th grade level on these assessments, although some of the study local areas made exceptions for truck-driving training. Customers were also required to meet the training program's admission requirements, which often included having a minimum of a high school diploma or GED certificate. Six study local areas also made ITA eligibility contingent upon a high school diploma or GED certificate, regardless of whether the chosen training program required one. To be eligible for OJT, most study local areas required that the customer be “job ready,” have a completed resume, meet the employer requirements of the OJT position, and lack the skills to be acquired through the OJT.
3. **Completion of activities required for ITA approval.** Staff in many study local areas viewed customers' ability to complete their assigned tasks in developing a training plan—

such as researching occupations and training programs—as a way to assess customers’ motivation and, hence, their likelihood of completing the training program and becoming employed. Although these tasks helped ensure that customers were choosing an appropriate training program, they also served as a screening mechanism. We discussed these activities, which are classified as intensive services, in Chapter IV. Box V.1 describes the types of activities that were required to be issued an ITA in a typical study local area.

4. **Possession of supports to complete training.** Nearly all study local areas also took into account whether the customer had enough financial and other support to complete the training program. This consideration involved ensuring that the customer had the means to pay any costs of participating in the training that were not covered by WIA or other funding sources. Local area staff also checked whether the customer had child care (if necessary) and transportation to the training program. As discussed in Chapter VI, some study local areas also funded supportive services for training customers to help with their child care and transportation expenses while they were in training.
5. **Training linked to employment opportunities.** WIA required that ITA-funded training be linked to employment opportunities in the local area (or a place to which the customer was willing to relocate). The Act left to the states and local areas the decision about which occupations met this requirement and were deemed “in demand.” Factors used by study local areas to determine the allowable in-demand occupations included the number of new hires in the occupation, growth in employment in the occupation, the entry and average wage, skill levels, and the opportunities for career advancement in the occupation, as determined through a review of labor market information. Some study local areas included only occupations in specific sectors.⁸ As a result of these criteria, at least four study local areas approved ITAs for fewer than 40 occupations. In many study local areas, however, customers could obtain waivers to select occupations that did not meet all the local area’s criteria for being in demand and linked to employment, as long as they showed some evidence of demand for the occupation. Twelve study local areas stipulated that OJT contracts be written only for occupations on the local area’s “in demand” occupation list or in the area’s high-growth industries. In the other local areas, the occupation was deemed “in demand” if an employer offered the OJT slot.
6. **Inability to find other grant assistance to pay for training.** WIA intended its funding for training to be the funding of last resort, to be used only when other funding was not available. Hence, all 28 study local areas required that customers seeking an ITA first apply for a Pell grant if they were potentially eligible for one. In addition, about three-quarters of the study local areas also required that customers apply for other grant assistance. Thus, only customers unable to find other grant assistance would receive an ITA.

⁸ See Ziegler (2015a) for a discussion of local areas’ focus on helping job seekers find employment in specific sectors.

Box V.1. An example of a typical process to obtain an ITA

Customers seeking an ITA in Central Region (Missouri)—which was typical of many study local areas in its ITA approval process—needed to conduct the following steps before their ITA was approved:

1. **Attend a group orientation.** Customers were required to attend a group orientation where a career counselor would explain the requirements to obtain an ITA.
2. **Take assessments.** At a one-on-one meeting with a career counselor after the orientation, the customer was instructed to take the TABE assessment in the AJC's computer lab. A score higher than 9.9 was required for the customer to be eligible for training. If training eligible, the customer took the O*NET Interest Profiler and Work Importance Profiler assessments. Following completion of these assessments, the customer would meet again with the career counselor to discuss the results and how well those results fit with the customer's chosen training occupation, or, for the customer who was not yet sure of a training occupation, appropriate occupations for the customer to pursue.
3. **Conduct research on programs.** Following these meetings, the customer visited the state's labor market information web site and reviewed wages and employment trends for the occupation being considered. The customer also researched three training providers and completed information about each provider on the training provider research form. Visiting the training providers in person was also encouraged.
4. **Discuss training plan with counselor.** The career counselor confirmed that the customer had completed the required tasks. First, the counselor reviewed the labor market information downloaded by the customer to confirm that the customer was satisfied with the wages that could be expected after training. Then, the counselor reviewed the completed training provider research form and discussed with the customer which three training programs would be most suitable based on characteristics such as location, length of program, cost, availability of financial aid from sources other than the ITA, and time and frequency of classes.
5. **Complete an ITA application form.** The customer visited the chosen training provider to complete and sign a form with information on the provider, the start and end dates for the program, the program costs (tuition, fees, and supplies), and the amount and type of non-WIA financial aid the customer would receive from the provider or other sources.
6. **Provide ITA application form to the career counselor.** At a one-on-one appointment, the customer gave the counselor the completed ITA application form, which the counselor used to complete a "Training Request" form that would be sent with all of the customer's completed forms to the WIA contractor's program director for approval.
7. **Meet with career counselor to discuss next steps.** Once the plan was approved, the career counselor met with the customer again to go over requirements such as submitting monthly progress and attendance reports, communicating at least monthly with the counselor, submitting grades for each semester, and providing evidence of credentials earned. The customer signed an acceptance form and a waiver to allow the training provider to share data directly with the WIA program about the customer's progress.

To continue to receive training funding, customers needed to provide evidence that they were successfully participating in the training program. As described in Chapter IV, career counselors monitored grades and attendance. If satisfactory progress was not made—for example, the customer did not have a C average, or attendance was poor—the local area would stop funding the training.

Training types and funding mechanisms

WIA authorized five main types of training services: (1) classroom occupational skills training, upgrading, or retraining; (2) OJT; (3) customized training; (4) adult basic education and literacy activities (combined with other training); and (5) entrepreneurial training (Table V.1). WIA also specified that although most training should be funded via ITAs, other types of training could be provided by contracts with employers or through contracts with training providers for cohorts of trainees. Three training types—occupational skills training, upgrading, or retraining; adult basic education and literacy activities; and entrepreneurial training—were primarily funded through ITAs but could be funded through other types of contracts with training providers. OJT and customized training were primarily funded through contracts between local areas and employers.

Table V.1. Types of WIA-authorized training

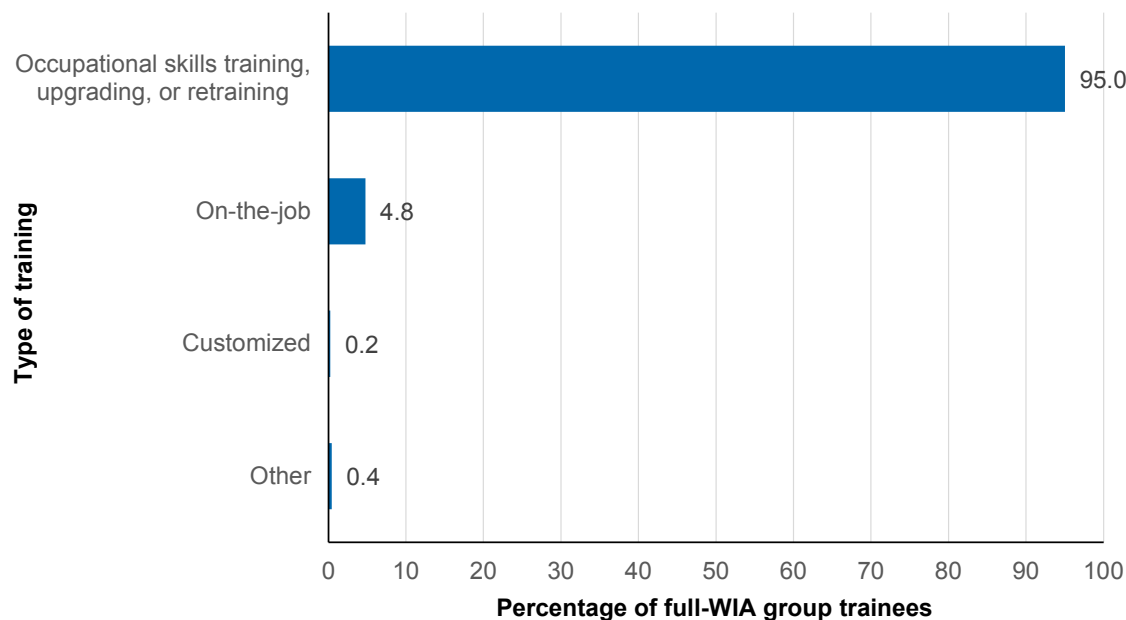
Type of training	Description	Primary funding mechanism
Occupational skills/skills upgrading/retraining training	Classroom training to gain or improve skills in a particular occupation	ITA
On-the-job training	Work-based training that employee receives for a specific job	Contract with employer
Customized training	Job training that is customized for an employer and provided to current or prospective employees	Contract with employer
Adult basic education and literacy activities	Basic skills or remedial instruction in math and language skills such as English as a second language (ESL) instruction; provided only in combination with another type of training	ITA
Entrepreneurial training	Training to provide prospective entrepreneurs and small business owners with entrepreneurial skills	ITA

Source: Workforce Investment Act of 1998.

Across the five types of training, most members of the full-WIA group (95 percent) received occupational skills training, upgrading, or retraining (Figure V.3). Just less than 5 percent of the trainees in the full-WIA group participated in an OJT opportunity; less than 1 percent received adult basic training, customized training, or entrepreneurial training.

Generally, the pattern of training by type was similar across study local areas. Most trainees in all study local areas participated in occupational skills training, upgrading, or retraining. However, some study local areas focused more on OJT than others (Figure V.4). According to the WIASRD, eight study local areas provided no OJT opportunities to full-WIA group members. In six study local areas, more than 15 percent of trainees participated in OJT. For example, in Waukesha-Ozaukee-Washington Counties (Wisconsin), 32 percent of all trainees participated in OJT. These figures understate the extent to which OJT was provided because customers who were identified by a business for an OJT slot were excluded from the impact study (Mastri et al. 2015).

Figure V.3. Types of training received by full-WIA group trainees (percentages)



Source: WIASRD records extracted between January 2014 and November 2014.

Note: This estimate is the weighted percentage of customers assigned to the full-WIA group who received training of each type. The data on the type of training is missing for all customers in Indianapolis (Indiana) and for a small proportion of customers in other study local areas. The 6.8 percent of customers in the full-WIA group who participated in training for whom information on the type of training is missing are excluded from the calculations. “Other” types of training include adult basic education and entrepreneurial training. Some trainees received multiple types of training.

Occupational skills training funded through ITAs

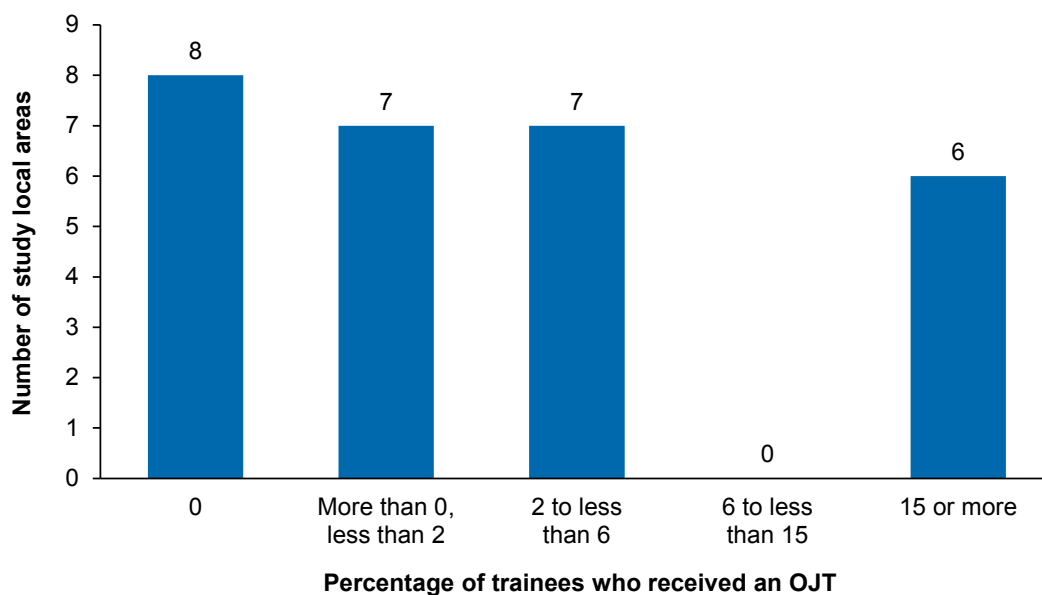
Most training services provided by the study local areas were occupational skills, upgrading, and retraining funded through ITAs. According to the WIASRD, 89 percent of the trainees in the full-WIA group across all local areas received an ITA. When awarding ITAs, local areas reviewed the customers’ requests to ensure that they met WIA and local area guidelines that placed restrictions on (1) customers’ choice of training program and (2) the size of the award.

Restrictions on choice of training program

As required by WIA, customers used an ITA to pay only for training programs listed on the state ETPL. Some study local areas also put other restrictions on the choice of training program.

The ETPL. The ETPL was a state-assembled and -maintained list of providers’ training programs that met minimum standards of performance. The state lists included information about each program submitted by the training provider—such as the field of study, duration, cost, and performance. Internet-based consumer report systems provided information on the outcomes of training participants in the programs on the ETPL. Two study local areas—Chicago (Illinois) and New York City—provided their own consumer report systems, which local area staff generally viewed as more user-friendly and providing more performance information than the state system.

Figure V.4. Number of study local areas by percentage of trainees in the full-WIA group who received an OJT



Source: WIASRD records extracted between January 2014 and November 2014.

Note: The figure presents weighted estimates of the percentage of full-WIA group trainees who received OJT according to the WIASRD. The data on the type of training is missing for all customers in Indianapolis (Indiana) and for a small proportion of customers in other study local areas. The 6.8 percent of customers in the full-WIA group who participated in training for whom information on the type of training is missing are excluded from the calculations.

Credential attainment. Twelve study local areas required that ITAs fund only training programs that led to a credential. Typically, the credential needed to be industry-recognized or recognized by the state’s educational agency. However, in one local area—Southwest Corner Pennsylvania—a certificate of completion recognized only by the training provider was deemed acceptable.

Evidence that customers researched multiple training programs. As discussed in Chapter IV, many study local areas required customers, and others strongly encouraged them, to research multiple potential training programs. Customers were typically required to research a minimum of three programs, collecting information about costs, length, availability of other types of financial aid for the program, and post-training job placement rates. Although they were usually able to conduct this research by consulting the consumer report system, conducting web-searches, or making phone calls, four study local areas also required customers to visit providers in person, collecting signatures of training program staff members as proof of their visits.

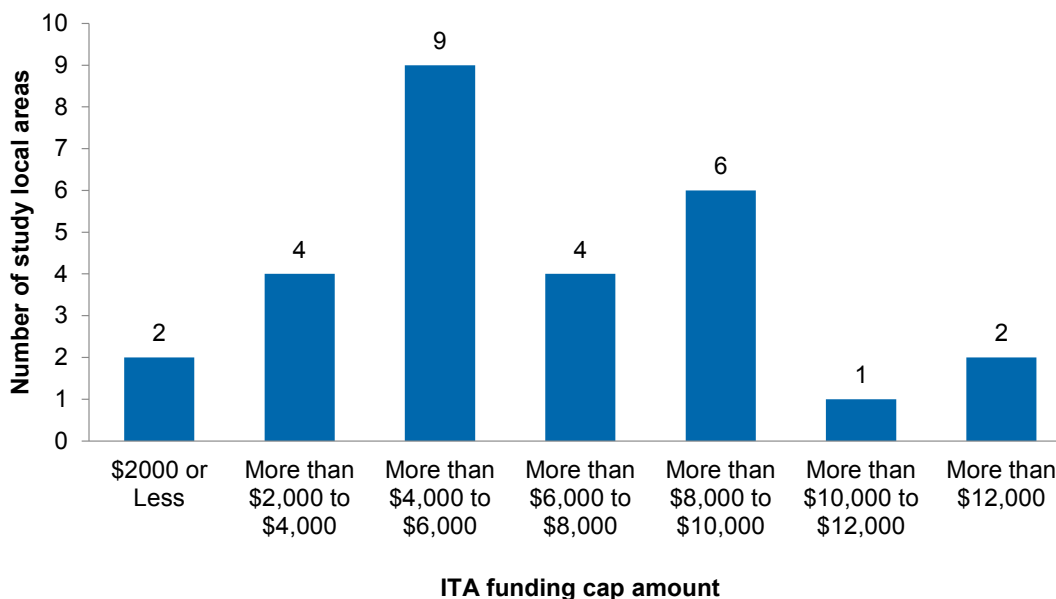
Role of career counselor in program choice. Across the study local areas, career counselors rarely denied an ITA for a training program chosen by customers who met all the eligibility-related criteria. However, if a counselor believed, based on assessment results, that a customer had selected a training program that was a poor match for the customer’s skills, the career counselor typically suggested additional programs for the customer to consider.

Restrictions on the ITA award

Caps. All 28 study local areas established a cap or maximum on its ITA awards. Customers who chose to participate in a training program that cost more than this cap had to pay the remaining program cost themselves or find another source of funds to offset the difference. If customers chose to participate in a training program that cost less than this cap, the ITA award was aligned to match this cost.

Across the study local areas, the overall ITA award cap or maximum—applied to all ITAs—ranged from \$2,000 to more than \$12,000, with an average of \$7,000 (Figure V.5). Most study local areas (19 out of 28) established a cap between \$4,000 and \$10,000. Only six study local areas granted exceptions to these caps, and even in those local areas, the exceptions required LWIB or state approval.

Figure V.5. Caps on ITA awards across the 28 study local areas



Source: WIA Gold Standard Evaluation qualitative data collection, 2012–13.

A little more than one-third of the study local areas (10 of 28) established caps lower than these overall caps for some training programs. Local area administrators' most commonly stated reason for multiple caps was to match the programs' investment in training with the expected return on investment. Hence, caps were higher for training for occupations that were expected to lead to more employment and higher earnings. ITA caps in the study local areas varied by:

- Training occupation (5 local areas)
- Industry or sector (3 local areas)
- Type of credential that would be attained (2 local areas)
- Training duration (1 local area)

Box V.2 describes the four tiers of ITA caps used by First Coast (Florida) based on the occupation's wage and whether it was in a science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) field. At least one study local area lowered the cap when training funds were running out, to stretch training dollars and provide training to more customers.

Box V.2. An example of a tiered ITA cap with higher ITA caps for high wage and STEM occupations

First Coast (Florida) established four ITA cap tiers, depending on the reported entry and average wage for the occupation as established on its Regional Targeted Occupations List and whether the occupation was in a STEM field. An ITA could not be used for an occupation that had a starting or "entry" wage of less than \$10.56 per hour or an average wage over all employees in the occupation of less than \$13.00 per hour. The four tiers were:

- **Tier 1:** ITA cap of \$6,000 for occupations not in a STEM field with an entry wage between \$10.56 and \$13.00 per hour or an average wage of between \$13.00 and \$20.38 per hour
- **Tier 2:** ITA cap of \$7,000 for occupations in a STEM field with an entry wage between \$10.56 and \$13.00 per hour or an average wage of between \$13.00 and \$20.38 per hour
- **Tier 3:** ITA cap of \$8,000 for occupations not in a STEM field with an entry wage of at least \$13.00 per hour and an average wage of at least \$20.38 per hour
- **Tier 4:** ITA cap of \$9,000 for occupations in a STEM field with an entry wage of at least \$13.00 per hour and an average wage of at least \$20.38 per hour

The ITA covered the cost of tuition, books, and fees.

Limit on program length. All but one study local area imposed a limit on the length of the training program. Most commonly, local areas restricted ITA support for up to two years of training. However, career counselors reported that the limits affected few customers, because customers were not typically interested in long training programs, and in many study local areas, customers could receive a waiver from the limit.

Allowable uses. More than half the study local areas limited ITAs to cover only tuition or tuition and certain fees. However, other local areas permitted ITAs to cover books, test fees, and other training supplies in addition to tuition and common fees.

On-the-job training

Administrators in almost all of the study local areas (26 of 28 local areas) reported establishing some contracts with employers to provide OJT, but relatively few full-WIA group customers participated in an OJT (Figure V.3).⁹ WIA required that employers providing OJT be reimbursed for up to 50 percent of OJT participants' salary during the training period. As specified in federal regulations, OJT participants were hired by the employers at the start of the training period and were expected to continue to employ participants after the training's completion.

⁹ Two reasons could account for why some local areas reported having OJT contracts but did not have full-WIA group members participating in an OJT (see Figure V.4). First, some of the existing OJT contracts might have been for customers who were referred for an OJT by the employer. These customers were exempt from the study. Second, some local areas might have had experience with OJT contracts but did not have any active OJT trainees at the time of the study.

Administrators in the study local areas reported receiving encouragement from their states and LWIBs to establish OJT opportunities, because they considered job seekers more likely to remain employed after completing OJT than after training that was not affiliated with an employer. Many staff viewed OJTs as particularly effective for job seekers who were missing just a few required skills for a particular job or whose learning styles were ill suited to classroom training. They also maintained that businesses benefited from OJT, because their employees receive subsidized training tailored to their specific needs.

Establishing an OJT contract. Typically, WIA business services staff marketed OJT opportunities to businesses, established contracts with businesses, and worked with career counselors to screen candidates for the OJT positions. In about one-fifth of study local areas, staff also encouraged customers looking for work to discuss these opportunities with potential employers. Business service staff members were responsible for determining whether the OJT opportunity met the federal rules and any additional local area rules. Box V.3 lists the federal rules for OJT. Local areas also established their own requirements for OJTs, which included one or more of the following criteria:

- The business was financially sound and could continue to employ the OJT trainee at the conclusion of the OJT contract
- The position was not part-time or primarily on commission
- The total amount paid in wages could not exceed a cutoff (typically about \$7,000 but ranging from \$2,000 to \$13,000)
- The hourly wage exceeded a cutoff (ranging from \$9 to \$16 per hour)
- The training established a minimum and maximum length (typically between one and six months)

The final contract with the employer typically included a training plan that identified the gap between the job requirements and the customer's skills, and how training would fill the gaps.

Customers' eligibility for OJT. Career counselors typically determined customers' eligibility for OJT, although often business services staff would also screen potential OJT participants. Employers interviewed OJT candidates before they were hired. Employers were offered either one or several customers to interview, depending on the preference of the employers and on the number of suitable job seekers available. In some instances, employers requested that specific job seekers be considered for OJT. These OJT candidates were exempted from the study so as not to jeopardize AJCs' relationships with employers (Mastri et al. 2015).

Monitoring an OJT placement. Across the study local areas, WIA staff members conducted at least one in-person monitoring visit to the employer's location to ensure that (1) the OJT participant was receiving training as specified in the training plan and (2) the employer was maintaining appropriate documentation and adhering to all requirements. However, in many study local areas, WIA staff maintained more frequent contact with employers during OJTs, contacting them in person, by phone, or via email, usually monthly. In at least one study local area, this contact occurred when the WIA staff person visited the employer's location to pick up the employer's monthly invoice for reimbursement and the OJT participant's signed time sheet.

Box V.3. Federal requirements for OJT

- The employer had not previously exhibited a pattern of failing to provide OJT customers with long-term employment with wages, benefits, and working conditions equal to those provided to regular employees who worked a similar length of time and were doing the same work.
- The employer's establishment, if it was new or expanding, had not relocated employment from another area.
- OJT funds could not be used to directly or indirectly assist, promote, or deter union organizing or for sectarian activities.
- An OJT participant could not displace any currently employed worker.
- The OJT contract could not impair existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements.
- OJT participants were entitled to compensation at the same rates, including receipt of periodic increases, and the same benefits and working conditions as equally qualified trainees or employees who were situated in similar occupations by the same employer.
- The employer's compensation rates were in accordance with applicable laws.
- The employer provided workers' compensation coverage and was in compliance with relevant state and federal health and safety standards and with the nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions of WIA.

Source: WIA regulations, 667.268-275 and 663.700-730; WIA 195(4).

Reasons for the limited use of OJT. Even though states and local staff viewed OJT opportunities favorably, only small percentages of job-seeking customers received OJT. According to staff in study local areas, many businesses were reluctant to provide these opportunities, because setting up and monitoring them required considerable time, they were concerned that they would be expected to continue to employ trainees at the end of the training, and the training subsidy was too low. In addition, local area administrators reported that they did not have sufficient staff resources to develop additional OJT opportunities.

Other training types

As described above, most of the trainees in the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs received an ITA to pay for occupational skills training, and a small proportion of trainees received OJT. However, some study local areas also offered, for a very small proportion of trainees, adult basic education (combined with other training), entrepreneurial training, customized training, or occupational skills training provided to cohorts of customers through a contract with a training provider.

Adult basic education. Twenty-six of the 28 study local areas set policies that made most customers with low basic skills ineligible to receive any type of WIA-funded training. Local area staff members gave three primary reasons for restricting WIA customers' access to adult basic education. First, they stated that WIA did not need to fund this education when other community entities already offered these education opportunities. Second, WIA required that adult basic education be provided concurrently with another type of training. However, local area staff reported that many training providers would not allow customers to enroll concurrently in remedial classes and their training programs. Finally, local area staff reported that customers

enrolled in adult basic education programs often dropped out before completing them. Thus, these customers did not meet WIA's requirement that they were likely to "participate successfully" in training.

Entrepreneurial training. Local area staff members reported that they usually did not fund entrepreneurial training for two main reasons. First, entrepreneurial training programs typically did not meet the local, state, or federal requirements for ITAs. For example, entrepreneurial training programs usually did not lead to an industry or state-recognized credential in an in-demand occupation, which was an ITA requirement in many study local areas. Second, WIA staff members in two study local areas expressed concern about participants' outcomes. They said that these trainees typically did not achieve good earnings after participating in such training, often because they did not have the resources to start their own businesses.

Customized training. Thirteen of the 28 study local areas provided "customized training," albeit to a very small number of customers. In these training opportunities, the LWIB and employer shared the cost of the training that was customized to meet the employer's needs. Most customized training was provided to incumbent workers—those already employed by the businesses—although in a few study local areas, new hires received customized training. WIA permitted local areas to use their Adult and Dislocated Worker local formula funding for customized training but allowed funding for training for incumbent workers only if the customers met eligibility requirements for intensive and training services and were determined to need training "to obtain or retain employment that leads to self-sufficiency" (Training and Employment Guidance Letter 18-05). However, states could obtain a federal waiver to use their formula funding to train a broader group of incumbent workers. Of the 13 study local areas that provided customized training, 2 were in states that had obtained these waivers. The other 11 study local areas funded customized training for incumbent workers through WIA statewide discretionary funds or other sources.

The study local areas that offered customized training did so for only a small number of customers, for reasons similar to their reasons for the limited use of OJT opportunities. In addition, staff cited restrictions on the use of local formula funds to provide training to incumbent workers as a limitation to funding customized training.

Contracted training for cohorts of customers. WIA allowed cohorts of customers to receive occupational skills training paid for through contracts with service providers. Although these contracts were rarely used, a few study local areas reported establishing them. Box V.4 provides two examples of training provided to cohorts of low-skilled customers under a contract with the training provider.

Box V.4. Two examples of training provided to cohorts of workers

Occupational skills training with case management. New York City contracted with a community college to provide funding for short-term training in health care occupations to groups of low-skilled customers. An Educational case manager was assigned to each cohort of 25 to 30 customers. The case manager, located at the community college, regularly checked in with each trainee.

Integrating adult basic education with occupational skills. Chicago (Illinois) contracted with community-based organizations to provide occupational skills and adult basic education to small cohorts of low-skilled customers. Some programs fully integrated instruction in English, math, and writing with instruction in an occupation. For example, customers worked on reading and comprehension by reading passages about the health care industry. Other programs provided basic education in the first few weeks and then turned to occupational skills. These programs were generally between 4 and 26 weeks long. Customers who completed these programs typically moved on to participate in longer term occupational skills training programs at a community college.

Exhausting training funds

Administrators in half of the study local areas reported exhausting their training funds at some time in the three years prior to our visits in 2012. These local areas could not approve training for eligible customers until they received additional funds. Although most of the study local areas that ran out of funds did so near the end of the program year, formula funds for training were lacking for longer periods in at least three study local areas—Muskegon (Michigan), Northwest Pennsylvania, and Southeast Michigan.

Most of the study local areas that ran out of funds created waiting lists of customers determined eligible for training. In some instances, customers on these waiting lists were not enrolled in intensive services, and the training approval process could not begin until training funds became available. In other study local areas, customers on the waiting list were enrolled in intensive services and continued working through their training approval processes so that they would be able to move quickly into training once funding became available. Local areas that did not use waiting lists asked customers interested in training to check back periodically to see whether funds had become available. They adopted this approach because, in their experience, customers on waiting lists were likely to drop out before funding was available, thus making the approval processes a waste of both customer and staff time.

VI. SUPPORTIVE AND FOLLOW-UP SERVICES

In addition to core, intensive, and training services, the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs also offered supportive and follow-up services. WIA intended supportive services to provide assistance, such as payments for transportation, tools, and child care, so that customers could participate in training and other services (WIA Section 134(e)(2)) and address barriers to reaching their employment goals. The Act intended follow-up services to support customers' employment retention or re-employment after they exited from the program (WIA Section 134(d)(1)(k)).

The study did not alter who was eligible to receive supportive or follow-up services and some customers in all three study groups were eligible to receive supportive and follow-up services. In practice, the extent to which customers were offered these services varied by study local area; generally, customers in the full-WIA and core-and-intensive groups were eligible for more services than those in the core group.

Neither supportive nor follow-up services were a major component of the WIA Adult or Dislocated Worker program. Most study local areas made small amounts of funds available to assist customers overcome barriers to participating in training or other services. Other study local areas relied on other programs in the community to provide this support. Follow-up services were mainly short contacts with customers—by email or telephone—designed to collect information required for performance measurement. Some staff offered assistance during these contacts with customers.

This chapter describes how the local areas participating in the study provided supportive and follow-up services.

Supportive services

WIA specified that the following services were eligible for funding as supportive services: assistance with transportation, child and dependent care, housing, temporary shelter, or needs-related payments “that are necessary to enable an individual to participate in activities” and were not available through other programs (WIA Section 101(46)). As we discuss in Chapters III and IV, WIA career counselors often referred customers (in the core-and-intensive or full-WIA group) to other government and community-based agencies for these and other supportive services. These organizations included community food banks, community action agencies, community health networks, and local public assistance offices. Most referrals consisted of career counselors providing information to customers about where to go for needed services, and they sometimes provided informational leaflets about the referred agency. However, WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker funds were also used to directly fund supportive services in some cases. This section focuses on supportive services that were funded by WIA.

At the time of the WIA Gold Standard Evaluation's cost study data collection (PYs 2011 and 2012), 5 of the 28 study local areas—Central Pennsylvania, First Coast (Florida), New York City, Northwest Pennsylvania, and Twin Districts (Mississippi)—provided no supportive services funded by the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs (McCutcheon and Mastro 2015). Those study local areas that used some WIA Adult or Dislocated Worker formula funds

for supportive services typically spent only a small proportion of their budget on these services. The cost study found that the study local areas spent on average 3 percent of their formula funds on supportive services (McCutcheon and Matri 2015). Only two study local areas—East Tennessee and North Central Texas—spent more than 10 percent of their funding on supportive services; one spent 14 percent, and the other spent 21 percent. Many local areas reported that they could leverage other programs and resources for supportive services and reserve Adult and Dislocated program funds to serve more customers with employment and training assistance.

Types of supportive services

We categorized the WIA-funded supportive services provided by the study local areas into five types (Figure VI.1):

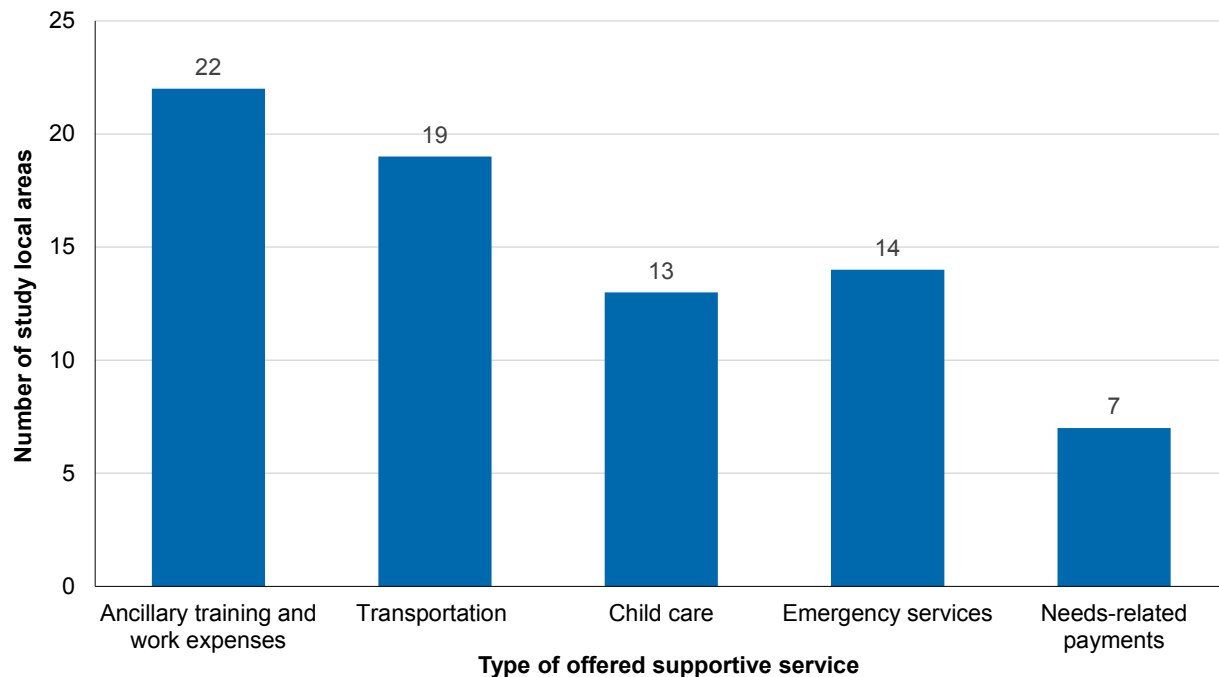
1. **Ancillary training and work expenses.** Twenty-two of the 28 study local areas covered at least some of these expense types as supportive services; ITA awards covered these expenses in the remaining six study local areas. Some of these expenses were related to training: books, tools and other supplies, and testing fees. This category also covered expenses related to finding a job: interview clothes, uniforms, tools, and fees for licenses, certifications, and background checks. Some of these expenses, such as books, were recurrent; most were one-time expenses.
2. **Transportation.** Nineteen study local areas provided transportation assistance, including assistance with the costs of travel required to (1) participate in training or other services, (2) search for a job, or (3) relocate to find employment. Support typically took the form of either mileage reimbursement or gas vouchers for customers with their own cars or a monthly bus pass for those without access to a car. Study local areas often established guidelines for how transportation expenses should be reimbursed. For example, for customers in training, North Central Texas capped mileage reimbursement at \$8 per day for round trips under 50 miles and \$15 per day for round trips over 50 miles. In several study local areas, transportation assistance could also cover emergency car repair.
3. **Child care.** Thirteen study local areas provided some child care assistance. Child care services typically involved vouchers or reimbursement for the cost of child care while the customer was in training or searching for a job. Local areas limited the availability of this assistance in various ways; some local areas, for example, capped the number of allowable days of assistance.
4. **Emergency services.** Fourteen study local areas provided financial assistance, typically one time, to help customers through a crisis. This assistance would help customers with medical, dental, or vision expenses, rental or mortgage payments, relocation costs, utility bills, or food expenses.
5. **Needs-related payments.** According to WIA, needs-related payments were to be reserved for individuals who exhausted or did not qualify for unemployment compensation, and who needed the payments to undertake training. Seven study local areas offered these payments.

Customers could receive services from more than one of these categories.

At the time of the qualitative data collection, seven study local areas offered all five types of supportive services—Fresno (California), East Tennessee, Sacramento (California), South Plains

(Texas), Southeast Michigan, Southwest Corner Pennsylvania, and Waukesha-Ozaukee-Washington Counties (Wisconsin).

Figure VI.1. Number of study local areas offering supportive services, by type



Source: WIA Gold Standard Evaluation qualitative data collection, 2012–2013.

Note: Twenty-eight local areas participated in the study. The six study local areas not using supportive services for ancillary training and work expenses used ITA awards for this purpose.

Eligibility for supportive services

Although WIA broadly defined eligibility for supportive services, most study local areas established additional eligibility criteria for receipt of these services. The WIA final rules restricted eligibility to those who needed support to participate in core, intensive, or training services after exhausting other sources (U.S. Department of Labor 2000). Most of the 23 study local areas that offered supportive services further restricted eligibility for these services. For example, the Chautauqua County (New York) local area policy stated that the supportive service payments for books, licenses, and work-related fees were available only to individuals with incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Similarly, in Fresno County (California), customers qualified for supportive services only if their total household income was equal to or less than total household expenses, and their household income was at or below the locally defined self-sufficiency levels.

In addition, 14 of the 23 study local areas that provided WIA-funded supportive services offered these services only if customers received other specific services. Ten study local areas offered supportive services only to customers receiving intensive or training services, and an additional four local areas offered supportive services only to customers in training. The remaining nine local areas offered customers supportive services irrespective of the other services they received (see Box VI.1 for an example).

Box VI.1. Providing supportive services regardless of service tier

Gulf Coast (Texas) was unusual in the wide availability of supportive services regardless of other service receipt. Assistance under \$200 was readily available to any AJC customer, regardless of the other services the customer was receiving. A career counselor would meet with a customer expressing interest in the financial assistance and would assess the customer's need. As long as the customer presented a compelling case that the assistance would be a critical factor in getting or retaining a job, the assistance would be granted. Assistance above \$200 was available for supportive services for customers participating in WIA-funded training.

In all study local areas that offered supportive services, career counselors assessed individuals' needs and eligibility for supportive services and administered or coordinated these services. Typically, career counselors began assessing customers' supportive services needs during the assessment and the development of their IEP. For example, when developing the IEP, career counselors in the Seattle-King County (Washington) local area used a self-sufficiency calculator to assess customers' financial status and consequent need and eligibility for supportive services.

Customers' needs for supportive services were also reviewed by career counselors throughout their participation in WIA-funded activities. Career counselors reported checking in routinely with their customers to assess their changing needs for supportive services. Those who had previously received supportive services needed to provide proof of continued need and eligibility. For example, customers were required to show enrollment in training or proof of a job interview to continue to receive transportation assistance. Study local areas also commonly required documentation of training attendance and grades before counselors would approve customers' requests for financial assistance to purchase books, supplies, and tools.

Study local areas differed in who had authority to approve requests for supportive services. In some local areas, the counselor could approve requests. In others, the AJC director or someone from the LWIB would approve the request. Box VI.2 describes one local area's approach to streamlining the process for approving supportive services requests.

Box VI.2. Streamlining the approval process

Between the first and second round of visits for the study, the Muskegon (Michigan) local area streamlined its procedures for approving requests for supportive services. The goal was to reduce the paperwork required for approving requests and reduce the time taken to assist customers, which had previously been about two weeks.

Under the new system, counselors assessed the customer's need and then accessed the local area's Intranet to ascertain the availability of supportive service funds, broken out by funding source, before making a supportive service request. Program managers reviewed and approved supportive service requests twice a day. The Fiscal Department issued checks for approved requests twice a week. Counselors could also authorize emergency checks of as much as \$50.

Caps on supportive services available to customers

In addition to establishing eligibility criteria, local areas commonly managed limited resources for supportive services by setting caps on the amount of supportive services funds available to eligible individuals. Of the 23 study local areas that offered any supportive services, all but two capped annual supportive services expenditures per customer. These caps—generally on all supportive services a customer could receive in a year—ranged from \$50 to \$5,000.

Some study local areas had different caps for customers receiving different tiers of service or different supportive services. For example, Indianapolis (Indiana) set a cap of \$50 for those receiving staff-assisted core services and a cap of \$1,000 for those in training. A few study local areas exempted transportation expenses from the calculation of the cap, and three study local areas placed caps on each type of service rather than the total amount. Box VI.3 provides an example of a study local area in which a cap was set for each type of supportive service.

Box VI.3. Setting caps for different types of supportive services

South Plains (Texas) specified maximum amounts for each type of supportive service that could be provided to customers receiving intensive or training services:

- Coverage for minor car repairs could not exceed \$1,500 in a 12-month period
- Reimbursement for clothing could not exceed \$500 in a 12-month period
- Relocation assistance could not exceed \$1,500 in total
- Housing and utility assistance could not exceed \$1,000 per housing-need occurrence and \$500 per utility-need occurrence, with no more than four occurrences of either kind in a 12-month period

Reduction in supportive services due to funding cuts

Administrators in eight study local areas reported making cuts to supportive services during the study period because of funding declines. Staff of one study local area reported making a 40 percent cut to supportive services funds in PY 2013 and planning for an additional 14 percent cut in PY 2014. Cuts to supportive services included eliminating reimbursement for transportation costs; tightening restrictions on support for tools, uniforms, or work certifications; or using supportive services funds only to assist in emergencies.

Follow-up services

Under WIA, follow-up was a required core service for customers placed in unsubsidized jobs. The Act specified that activities could include counseling “about the workplace” and was required for 12 months following the date of employment (WIA Section 134 (d)(K)). Like all core services, follow-up services must be available but only had to be provided to eligible customers who sought or expressed a need for them.

Staff of 25 of the 28 study local areas reported providing follow-up services. In 17 of these 25 local areas, staff reported that the services consisted largely or exclusively of attempts to contact customers to verify their employment, employment retention, wage gain, and/or educational attainment. These contacts were used to collect information needed to calculate the

WIA performance measures on customers' employment retention and earnings. Study local areas' approaches to providing follow-up services did not appear to differ by the tier of service or types of services received.

Staff in eight local areas reported that they also used the follow-up contacts to ask whether customers needed additional assistance. For example, a customer placed in a job might need transportation assistance to help with unexpected expenses, such as a car repair, and a customer who lost a job might be invited back into an AJC for additional counseling, resume preparation, or job referrals. Box VI.4 provides an example of the offer of this assistance at one study local area.

Box VI.4. Following up to identify customers' needs for assistance

In the Indianapolis (Indiana) local area—self-described as “likely the exception to the rule” as far as the intensity of follow-up services was concerned—career counselors contacted exited customers to identify emerging problems the customers were having on the job and to further develop the customers' soft skills, such as time management and appropriate communication with superiors. If they found that former customers had lost their jobs, counselors focused their follow-up services on connecting these customers to self-service tools and resources maintained by the local area to help them find new jobs.

Contacting customers for follow-up services usually involved sending a letter, making a telephone call, and/or sending an email message. In three local areas, staff members reported using text messaging or social media such as Facebook to reach out to customers.

Staff at study local areas reported that it was challenging to contact customers once they had exited the program. To obtain information on customers' employment status, East Tennessee offered \$50 in transportation assistance once a quarter for four quarters to customers who maintained contact, typically by providing proof of employment and needed additional assistance. Staff in seven study local areas reported that they also contacted employers to verify employment information if customers were unresponsive.

In most study local areas, follow-up contacts and services were provided by career counselors. In 17 study local areas, these contacts and services were considered another aspect of the career counselors' responsibilities. In the other study local areas, specially designated staff members were responsible for following up with customers.

VII. CROSS-CUTTING FINDINGS AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

The WIA Gold Standard Evaluation was designed to examine the effectiveness of the intensive and training services offered by the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. It is being conducted in 28 local areas that were randomly selected to be representative of local areas nationwide. To understand how the programs were implemented, we conducted multiple visits to the 28 nationally representative study local areas and their state workforce agencies and analyzed data from the WIASRD and study registration forms. This report describes the results from the evaluation's implementation study. Drawing on information from prior chapters, this final chapter presents the key cross-cutting findings and discusses their relevance under WIOA.

Cross-cutting findings

All study local areas offered a similar basic menu of services but varied considerably in how and to whom services were offered. All study local areas offered access to information about jobs, labor markets, and services; job search tools; assessments; assistance with career planning; case-management and counseling; and training. However, they differed in how they implemented the three-tier service delivery model. Specifically, they differed in:

- **How they configured their AJCs.** Some study local areas limited the number of AJCs but offered a comprehensive range of services at each; others offered a more limited set of services at some AJCs but, to provide more convenient access to customers, established a larger number of AJCs.
- **How much direction they provided new AJC customers.** Some study local areas directed all new AJC customers to use core services in the resource room before offering them intensive services; others provided an enhanced intake to all new AJC customers and then directed them to the most appropriate services, which may have been core, intensive, or training services.
- **Whether they offered job search assistance as an intensive service to customers not interested in training.** Some study local areas offered job search assistance to customers not interested in training and those interested in training; others primarily offered intensive services to guide, support, and monitor customers interested in training.
- **The restrictions placed on customers' choice of training program.** Although some study local areas allowed customers a wide choice of occupations and training programs, others limited customers to high-wage or high-growth occupations and/or training programs that led to the receipt of a credential. The maximum ITA amount also varied considerably across the local areas.

Services did not vary by whether they were funded by the Adult or Dislocated program. On average, Adult program customers had different characteristics than Dislocated Worker customers. Adult customers were on average younger, had less work experience, and were more disadvantaged than dislocated workers. Because services targeted the customers' needs in all study local areas, the services offered to an average Adult program customer differed from those offered to an average Dislocated Worker program customer. However, in all study local areas, a customer with the same characteristics would have been offered almost identical

services irrespective of whether these services were funded by the Adult or Dislocated Worker program.

The study occurred at a time of high unemployment and decreasing funding. Customers were enrolled in the study during a period of high, but declining, unemployment. When the first customer was randomly assigned, the national unemployment rate was just under 9 percent; it had fallen to just under 8 percent when the last customer was randomly assigned, and continued to fall thereafter. While the weak economy increased the demand for workforce services, funding for the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs was curtailed. Funding for the two programs declined by about 12 percent between 2010 and 2012. In 2012, when most of the customers were enrolled in the study, the combined Adult and Dislocated Worker program funding was just less than \$2 billion, the lowest in more than a decade. According to study local area administrators, this reduction led to the closing of AJCs, fewer career counselors, fewer ITAs, and reductions in supportive services.

Customers' motivation as determined by program staff was a key factor in their service receipt. With demand for staff assistance and training services exceeding their availability, the study local areas targeted service offerings to customers who complied with multiple program requirements. The requirements to receive training funds were extensive in most study local areas and included conducting research on multiple occupations and training programs. Some customers also needed to show that they had completed a resume, attended a workshop, or applied for jobs before receiving intensive services. Local area staff described the rationale for these requirements as a way to identify customers who were “motivated” and hence most likely to benefit from the services. Some staff noted that customers who satisfied these requirements were also more likely to have outcomes that would help the local area meet its performance goals.

Looking forward: implications for the workforce system under WIOA

Although WIOA makes major changes to the public workforce system, the findings from the WIA Gold Standard Evaluation can guide policymakers and program administrators going forward. WIOA leaves intact important elements of the service-delivery structure of the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. Services will continue to be accessed at AJCs. The Adult and Dislocated Worker programs will continue to include the same basic set of services offered under WIA. Customers will continue to choose their training with some restrictions, and will continue to be guided by employment counselors and results from assessments, labor market information, and information about eligible training programs.

Findings from the study suggest that many of the changes made by WIOA add flexibility for local areas to continue in directions they were already heading. For example:

- **Blending core and intensive services.** WIOA eliminates core and intensive services, replacing them with “career services.” We found that the distinction between core and intensive services was often not clear across study local areas. For example, some workshops were considered core services in some local areas and similar workshops were considered intensive services in other local areas.

-
- **Eliminating the sequence of services.** WIOA removes the requirement that customers receive core and intensive services (now career services) prior to receiving training services. Many study local areas, and especially those that focused on providing services to customers interested in training, moved customers through core and intensive services quickly. For example, some study local areas counted the interactions with the AJC greeter and determination of training eligibility as the core and intensive services required for training eligibility.
 - **Emphasizing credentials.** WIOA emphasizes the importance of customers obtaining employer-recognized credentials. It adds a performance measure to account for customers who achieve a credential or make progress toward a credential. However, even under WIA, some study local areas were either making training approval contingent on the possibility of attaining a credential or providing a higher ITA for programs that led to credentials.
 - **Collocating of ES and WIA programs.** WIOA requires the ES program to be colocated at AJCs. All but one of the 19 states with local areas participating in the study required that the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and ES be physically located at comprehensive centers on at least a part-time basis. In 24 of the 28 study local areas, ES and WIA established one resource room at AJCs that served both ES and WIA customers.

WIOA also responds to barriers that study local areas were facing in offering work-based training. For example, staff in study local areas noted that one reason the local areas did not fund more customer placements in OJT and customized training was that it was difficult to obtain businesses' participation. WIOA allows local areas to use up to 20 percent of their formula funds to fund employer-specific training for employed workers (incumbent training) and authorizes wage reimbursements for OJTs of up to 75 percent of the customer's wages, up from 50 percent under WIA. WIOA also allows 10 percent of local formula funds to be spent on transitional jobs, another type of work-based training. These changes might lead to more opportunities for customers to participate in work-based training.

This report provides a snapshot of how the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs were implemented nationwide in the early 2010s. Although the public workforce system will undergo major changes under WIOA, the basic infrastructure and services will remain intact. A forthcoming report will describe the effectiveness of the services provided under these two programs and examine how the local areas' different contexts and approaches may have affected their customers' employment outcomes.

This page has been left blank for double-sided copying.

REFERENCES

- D'Amico, Ronald. "Enhanced Intake for all American Job Center Customers: A Functionally-Aligned Model." WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs Gold Standard Evaluation Issue Brief prepared by Social Policy Research Associates. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, 2015.
- Dunham, Kate, Annelies Goger, Jennifer Henderson-Frakes, and Nichole Tucker. "Workforce Development in Rural Areas: Changes in Access, Service Delivery and Partnerships." U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration Occasional Paper 2005-07. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, 2005.
- Greenberg, David, Charles Michalopoulos, and Philip Robins. "A Meta-Analysis of Government-Sponsored Training Programs." Miami, FL: University of Miami Scholarly Repository, 2003.
- Kirby, Gretchen. "Managing Funding Challenges in the Workforce Investment Act Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs: Mitigating Strategies and Effects on Services." WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs Gold Standard Evaluation Issue Brief. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, 2015.
- Kogan, Deborah. "Organizing American Job Centers into Networks for the Delivery of Public Workforce Services." WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs Gold Standard Evaluation Issue Brief prepared by Social Policy Research Associates. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, 2015.
- Koller, Vinz, and Anne Paprocki. "Moving Toward Integrated Job Seeker Services: Collaboration Among American Job Center Programs." WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs Gold Standard Evaluation Issue Brief prepared by Social Policy Research Associates. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, 2015.
- Kosanovich, Karen, and Eleni Sherman Theodossiou. "Trends in Long-term Unemployment." Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, March 2015. Available at [<http://www.bls.gov/spotlight/2015/long-term-unemployment/pdf/long-term-unemployment.pdf>]. Accessed July 3, 2015.
- Lechner, Michael, and Conny Wunsch. "Are Training Programs More Effective When Unemployment is High?" *Journal of Labor Economics*, vol. 27, 2009, pp. 653–692.
- Mastri, Annalisa, Sheena McConnell, Linda Rosenberg, Peter Schochet, Dana Rotz, Andrew Clarkwest, Ken Fortson, AnnaMaria McCutcheon, Katie Bodenlos, Jessica Ziegler, and Paul Burkander. "Evaluating National Ongoing Programs: Implementing the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs Gold Standard Evaluation." Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, 2015.
- McCutcheon, AnnaMaria, and Annalisa Mastri. "How Do Local Workforce Investment Areas Spend Their Formula Funds?" WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs Gold Standard Evaluation Issue Brief. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, 2015.

-
- National Bureau of Economic Research. "U.S. Business Cycle Expansions and Contractions." Available at [<http://www.nber.org/cycles.html>]. Accessed May 1, 2015.
- Rosenberg, Linda, Mark Strayer, Stephanie Boraas, Brittany English, and Deanna Khemani. "Providing Services to Veterans Through the Public Workforce System: Descriptive Findings from the WIA Gold Standard Evaluation: Volume 1." Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, 2015.
- U.S. Congress. "Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014." Pub. Law No. 113-128. July 22, 2014. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2014. Available at [<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-113publ128/pdf/PLAW-113publ128.pdf>]. Accessed May 1, 2015.
- U.S. Congress. "Workforce Investment Act of 1998." Pub. Law No. 105-220. August 7, 1998. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1998. Available at [<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-105publ220/html/PLAW-105publ220.htm>]. Accessed May 1, 2015.
- U.S. Department of Labor, "FY 2015 Department of Labor Budget in Brief." Available at [<https://www.dol.gov/dol/budget/2015/PDF/FY2015BIB.pdf>]. Accessed October 8, 2015.
- U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. "Databases, Tables, & Calculators by Subject: Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey." Available at [<http://data.bls.gov/timeseries/LNS14000000>]. Accessed May 1, 2015a.
- U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. "20 CFR Part 652 et al. Workforce Investment Act; Final Rules." *Federal Register*, vol. 65, no. 156, Friday, August 11, 2000, pp. 49400.
- U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. "Workforce System Results: For the Quarter ending June 30, 2013 | Fourth Quarter, Program Year 2012 | Third Quarter, Fiscal Year 2013." Available at [http://www.doleta.gov/performance/results/pdf/workforcesystemresultsjune20_2013.pdf]. Accessed June 19, 2015b.
- U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. "Summary of Budget Authority, FY 1984 to 2013, By Year of Appropriation." Available at [<http://www.doleta.gov/budget/docs/tepbah.pdf>]. Accessed May 1, 2015c.
- U.S. Government Accountability Office. "Multiple Employment Training Programs: Overlap Among Programs Raises Questions About Efficiency." Washington, DC: U.S. Government Accountability Office, July 1994. Available at [<http://archive.gao.gov/t2pbat2/152138.pdf>]. Accessed May 30, 2015.
- Wolff, Kristin. "Governing the Public Workforce System: The Structure and Priorities of Local Workforce Investment Boards." WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs Gold Standard Evaluation Brief prepared by Social Policy Research Associates. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, 2015.
-

Ziegler, Jessica. "Sector Strategies: Aligning the Skills of the Workforce with the Needs of Employers." WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs Gold Standard Evaluation Issue Brief. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, 2015a.

Ziegler, Jessica. "Serving the Regional Economy: Collaboration Among Local Workforce Investment Boards." WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs Gold Standard Evaluation Issue Brief. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, 2015b.

This page has been left blank for double-sided copying.

APPENDIX A

**WIA GOLD STANDARD EVALUATION IMPLEMENTATION
ISSUE BRIEFS**

This page has been left blank for double-sided copying.

WIA GOLD STANDARD EVALUATION IMPLEMENTATION ISSUE BRIEFS

D’Amico, Ronald. “Enhanced Intake for all American Job Center Customers:A Functionally-Aligned Model.”

Dunham, Kate. “Workforce Investment Act Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs:Meeting the Needs of Business Customers.”

Kirby, Gretchen. “Managing Funding Challenges in the Workforce Investment Act Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs: Mitigating Strategies and Effects on Services.”

Kogan, Deborah. “Organizing American Job Centers into Networks for the Delivery of Public Workforce Services.”

Koller, Vinz and Paprocki, Anne. “Moving Toward Integrated Job Seeker Services:Collaboration Among American Job Center Programs.”

Mastri, Annalisa and AnnaMaria McCutcheon. “Costs of Services Provided by the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs.”

McCutcheon, AnnaMaria and Annalisa Mastri. “How Do Local Workforce Investment Areas Spend their Formula Funds?”

Negoita, Marian. “The Workforce Investment Act Accountability System:The Role of Performance Measures in Service Delivery.”

Wolff, Kristin. “Governing the Public Workforce System: The Structure and Priorities of Local Workforce Investment Boards.”

Ziegler, Jessica. “Sector Strategies: Aligning the Skills of the Workforce with the Needs of Employers.”

Ziegler, Jessica. “Serving the Regional Economy:Collaboration Among Local Workforce Investment Boards.”

This page has been left blank for double-sided copying.

APPENDIX B

OFFICIAL NAMES OF LOCAL AREAS PARTICIPATING IN THE STUDY

This page has been left blank for double-sided copying.

Table B.1. Official names of local areas participating in the study

Region	State	LWIB Name	Local area short name for report
3	GA	Atlanta Regional Workforce Board	Atlanta Region (Georgia)
1	NY	Capital Regional Workforce Investment Board	Capital Region (New York)
5	MO	Central Region Workforce Investment Board	Central Region (Missouri)
1	NY	Chautauqua County Workforce Investment Board	Chautauqua County (New York)
5	IL	Chicago Workforce Investment Council ^a	Chicago (Illinois)
3	TN	East Tennessee Human Resource Agency	East Tennessee
5	IN	EmployIndy Workforce Investment Board	Indianapolis (Indiana)
1	NJ	Essex County Workforce Investment Board	Essex County (New Jersey)
3	FL	First Coast Workforce Investment Board	First Coast (Florida)
6	CA	Fresno Regional Workforce Investment Board	Fresno County (California)
3	KY	The Greater Louisville Workforce Investment Board	Louisville (Kentucky)
4	TX	Gulf Coast Workforce Board	Gulf Coast (Texas)
3	SC	Lower Savannah Workforce Investment Area	Lower Savannah (South Carolina)
5	MI	Muskegon/Oceana Michigan Works! Workforce Development Board	Muskegon (Michigan)
4	LA	The New Orleans Workforce Investment Board	New Orleans (Louisiana)
1	NY	New York City Workforce Investment Board	New York City
4	TX	North Central Texas Workforce Development Board-Workforce Solutions	North Central Texas
2	PA	Northwest Workforce Investment Board	Northwest Pennsylvania
6	CA	Sacramento Works Workforce Investment Board	Sacramento (California)
3	SC	Santee-Lynches Workforce Investment Board	Santee-Lynches (South Carolina)
4	SD	South Dakota Workforce Development Council	South Dakota
5	MI	Southeast Michigan Community Alliance Workforce Investment Board	Southeast Michigan
4	TX	South Plains Workforce Development Board	South Plains (Texas)
2	PA	Southwest Corner Workforce Investment Board	Southwest Corner Pennsylvania
3	MS	Twin Districts Workforce Area	Twin Districts (Mississippi)
5	WI	The Waukesha-Ozaukee-Washington Workforce Development Board	Waukesha-Ozaukee-Washington Counties (Wisconsin)
6	WA	The Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County	Seattle-King County (Washington)
2	PA	Workforce Investment Board of Central Pennsylvania	Central Pennsylvania

Note: Official names reflect the names of the study local areas at the start of the study.

^a In July 2012, during the course of the WIA Gold Standard Evaluation, the Chicago Workforce Investment Council merged with the Workforce Board of Northern Cook County and Cook County Workforce Investment Board to form a single workforce investment area, the Chicago Cook Workforce Investment Board (staffed by the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership). Only those AJCs, affiliate, and satellite centers located within the boundaries of the City of Chicago participated in the study, both before and after the merger.

This page has been left blank for double-sided copying.

This page has been left blank for double-sided copying.

