



SOCIAL POLICY RESEARCH
ASSOCIATES

Findings from a Study of One-Stop Self-Services: A Case-Study Approach

Final Report
December 2009

Prepared for:

The U.S. Department of Labor
Employment and Training
Administration
Office of Policy Development
and Research
200 Constitution Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20210

DOL Contract Nos.
AF-11761-01-30 &
GS10F0281S
SPR Projects 1142 & 1383

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND ATTRIBUTIONS

Although this project was carried out primarily by Social Policy Research Associates, we wish to acknowledge the assistance of SPR's survey contractors, Decision Information Resources and Washington State University's Social and Economic Sciences Research Center, as well as the project's consultants, Drs. Burt Barnow and David Greenberg. Many staff at SPR contributed to making the project a success, including the authors of this report, but many others assisted with data collection and analysis, including Deanna Khemani, Micheline Magnotta, Candiya Mann, Jessica Pearlman, Dennis Rojas, Jeffrey Salzman, Richard West, and David Wright. Eloisa Dellosa, Colette Duncan, and Eric Engles additionally provided valuable editorial and administrative support. We wish to acknowledge as well the contributions and support of DOL staff, especially our project officers, Daniel Ryan and Russell Saltz. Their advice and steadfast support are much appreciated.

We are enormously grateful to the administrators and staff from the states and local areas who were very gracious in providing administrative data and hosting site visits from research staff. These include the LWIAs of Alameda County, Oakland, Richmond, Riverside, Sacramento, and San Diego, in California; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and South Plains and Brazos Valley, Texas. Special thanks too to the states of Pennsylvania and Texas for supplying Unemployment Insurance data. We also wish to thank additional LWIAs who hosted site visits, including Boulder, CO; Fulton County, GA; Ouachita Parish and Rapides Parish, LA; Metro South, MA; Kansas City, Southeast, and Franklin-Jefferson, MO; Chemung/Schuyler/Steuben and Oyster Bay, NY; Westmoreland/Fayette, PA; Trident, SC; Upper Rio, TX; and Olympic, WA. Their cooperation is much appreciated.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In an effort to expand its reach while containing costs, the public workforce investment system has increasingly come to rely on self-services—that is, those tools and resources that customers can use on their own or with minimal staff assistance. In an effort to learn more about self-services, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) funded Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) to conduct an implementation and outcomes study of self-services at selected One-Stop Career Centers nationwide. Specifically, the evaluation aimed to profile the characteristics of customers who use self-services, their motivation for using services, their patterns of usage, and the outcomes that follow. Additionally, the evaluation studied the ways that One-Stop Career Centers facilitate access to self-services, the staff assistance they provide to customers, and the resources and tools they make available. Results described in this report address these questions for the small number of case-study LWIAs that participated in the study and cannot be construed as generalizing to LWIAs nationwide.

Background

Facilitating the matching of job seekers with available jobs so as to improve the efficiency of the labor market has long been an important government function. Indeed, its history in the U.S. spans many decades. Furthermore, in their broad review of the realms within which government action can be justified on the grounds of economic efficiency, the Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph E. Stiglitz and his colleagues conclude that the DOL’s public labor exchange functions “seem consistent with the principles for government action.”¹

While the need for public labor exchange services has continued to be recognized, their mode of delivery has undergone an important change: self-services have become an increasingly important part of the way that job seekers access services, complementing the staff-assisted services that tended to predominate in earlier years. A number of factors underlie this trend,

¹ J. Stiglitz, P. Orszag, and J. Orszag, *The Role of Government in a Digital Age* (Paper commissioned by the Computer and Communications Industry Association, 2004).

including dramatic cutbacks in funding in real-dollar terms for the Wagner-Peyser program, a technological revolution that has facilitated the development and electronic dissemination of a wealth of information to job seekers, and cultural shifts that place emphasis on empowering customers to take charge of their own career development strategies.

Nonetheless, at present little is known about customers' use of self-service tools and resources, including who uses these services, how frequently, for what reasons, and with what effect. Indeed, the U.S. General Accounting Office has noted that, by largely excluding self-service customers, the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) reporting system can shed little light on the experiences of those who likely make up the largest pool of customers of publicly funded workforce services.² DOL has taken numerous steps in recent years to improve the accuracy and comprehensiveness of reporting, and has also funded this evaluation to help fill in gaps in available knowledge.

About the Evaluation

Key objectives of the evaluation focus on understanding who uses One-Stop Career Center self-services and characterizing the volume of usage. To shed light on these issues, the evaluation targeted local workforce investment areas (LWIAs) that asserted that they had systems in place to comprehensively track *all* customers who accessed self-services on-site and could provide basic information about these customers, including, at a minimum, identifying information (such as Social Security Numbers, names, and addresses), demographic information, and the dates on which services were accessed. To identify such areas, as well as to profile One-Stop Career Center self-services nationwide, a Local-Area Survey of One-Stop Self-Services was administered to LWIAs in 2003, and again in 2006.

Based on the survey results, a number of LWIAs were asked to participate in the evaluation, of which 23 did so to varying degrees.

- Nine LWIAs in three states provided extracts from their self-service usage data. These include six in California, one in Pennsylvania, and two in Texas. Each of these LWIAs provided complete data on its self-service users for at least a nine-month period, and some provided data for more than a two-year period. These data cover some part of the period from May 2004 through December 2006, with the precise period varying from LWIA to LWIA.

² U.S. General Accountability Office, *Workforce Investment Act: Additional Actions Would Further Improve the Workforce System*. Testimony of Sigurd Nelson, GAO-07-1051T (2007).

- Eight of these LWIAs as well as 14 others (for a total of 22 LWIAs in 11 states) hosted site visits from the research team. All these LWIAs had well developed self-service tracking systems in place, and their inclusion enables the study to speak more broadly about tracking mechanisms as well as to learn about self-service systems more generally.

To learn more about customers' experiences in using self-services, the project team also administered a survey of self-service users in five of the LWIAs that supplied tracking system data. Because the LWIAs supplied their self-service data extracts at different times, the customer surveys needed to be administered at different times as well. Surveys of customers in two LWIAs were administered in 2005, and in the three remaining LWIAs in 2007.

Finally, the evaluation team obtained UI wage data, collected from state UI agencies covering self-service users in three LWIAs in two states. Operationally, the project team first received the self-service usage data from these LWIAs, extracted the SSNs and transmitted them to the state UI agencies, and took receipt of the UI wage data in return. The UI wage data cover at least three quarters before and up to four quarters after each customer's use of self-services, and were used to measure customers' employment and earnings over time.

As the above description implies, the project has different pieces of data for different subsets of LWIAs, and complete data—local-area survey data, self-service tracking data, site visit data, customer survey data, and UI wage data—for only three of them. This limited coverage stems from the fact that relatively few LWIAs across the nation have comprehensive self-service tracking systems in place, and many of those who do have such systems were unwilling to share data with the evaluation team due to confidentiality concerns. Moreover, even if the LWIA agreed to supply data, state UI agencies were often reluctant to conduct UI wage matching due to similar confidentiality concerns. Because of the limited coverage, the findings described in this report should be viewed as representing case studies of a selected number of LWIAs rather than describing broad, national patterns.

As an additional qualifier, these are case studies of self-service usage that occurs *on-site*. The availability of many One-Stop delivery system tools and resources via the Internet means that many self-service customers may access these services remotely, from their homes, offices, or other locations, rather than on-site at a One-Stop Career Center.³ The profiles of customer usage

³ No credible estimate exists of the number of customers who access One-Stop self-services through the Internet alone (i.e., without also visiting a One-Stop Career Center in person). However, the numbers can be presumed to be considerable. For example, just before it ceased operation, America's Job Bank (AJB) received more than 16 million visits during each calendar quarter (AJB ceased operation in the summer of 2007), many of whom likely accessed services from a remote location.

and outcomes presented in this report are applicable only to those who access services on-site at a One-Stop Career Center.

Key Findings

The One-Stop Career Center self-service systems offer an extremely rich menu of service offerings and accommodate huge numbers of customers every day who find these services very useful. At the same time, the self-service system is under considerable strain. This strain is brought about by the large numbers of customers being served and the difficulties they have in accessing services without assistance, coupled with the limited funding and staffing that LWIAs have available to expand their self-service systems. With this backdrop, key findings of the evaluation are listed below, arranged under key topic headings that correspond to the chapters of the full report.

What Is Self-Service?

Relatively few on-site self-service customers can be viewed as truly self-sufficient, able to conduct an efficient and successful job search entirely on their own or with only a brief orientation to One-Stop Career Center services. Because of this fact, resource room staff play a major helping role that, while limited in scope and intensity, seems absolutely critical and obscures what it means to be a self-service customer.

Recognizing that many customers have extensive needs for assistance, at least one state and a number of LWIAs around the country have developed an integrated services delivery model that effectively classifies all resource room customers as having received WIA staff-assisted services. As part of their functional alignment of ES and WIA services, and motivated in part by a desire to be customer-focused, these areas mandate that virtually all visitors to the One-Stop Career Centers receive at least an initial assessment, which, in their view, constitutes significant staff involvement. Therefore, in these areas, almost no one is classified as receiving only self-services.

Findings from the Local-Area Survey

Nationwide, the infrastructure for One-Stop Career Center self-services is very well developed. Virtually all local areas have at least one comprehensive One-Stop Career Center, as WIA requires, and one-third of areas have six or more physical access points (i.e., comprehensive centers and satellites combined). Furthermore, most local areas make available a broad range of self-service informational tools and resources to both job-seeking and employer customers.

Access to services via the Internet has been growing, and this is now the most common way in which self-services are made available. This heavy reliance on the Internet as the medium for delivering services means that customers can access most self-services both on-site and off-site.

Most local areas express satisfaction with their self-service systems, but they note areas for improvement as well. Among the strengths they cite are the professionalism and helpfulness of their resource room staff, the special expertise that partner programs can provide, the accessibility of their services, the appealing physical setting in which services are provided, and their resource room's up-to-date equipment. They recognize notable challenges, however, especially that many customers have difficulty making use of self-services because of limited computer proficiency or weak literacy skills. For this reason, having the level of resource-room staffing needed to assist customers adequately was widely cited as an important remaining challenge. Also cited as an important challenge was having a budget adequate to support the self-service system.

Comprehensive systems for tracking self-service customers and resource room visits are not in place in the great majority of LWIAs. Although the majority of local areas require self-service customers to provide at least basic information about themselves (such as by signing their names on a sign-in sheet), the systems used to track self-service usage are still incomplete in most LWIAs around the country. Without mechanisms to track who uses self-services and for what purposes, the ability of local areas to fine-tune self-services to better meet customers' needs remains limited.

Facilitating Access to Self-Services

Referrals from partner agencies and word-of-mouth are the two most common means by which customers find their way to the resource rooms. LWIAs generally have limited budgets for marketing or outreach, and feel they are already operating at capacity. Therefore, they deem extensive marketing neither feasible nor prudent. Although general marketing is minimal, LWIAs do conduct more limited outreach to under-served populations.

LWIAs ensure the accessibility of their One-Stop Career Centers through strategic siting, but some areas could do more. To ensure easy access, One-Stop Career Centers are generally strategically located in downtown districts or neighborhood hubs, and on or near major public transportation lines. However, some centers display poor external signage, offer limited parking, or are located in remote areas that cannot easily be reached by public transportation. Additional features that would promote accessibility, such as offering evening or weekend hours, are uncommon.

Resource rooms present a professional and inviting setting for self-service customers, but centers' capacities during peak times are strained. Resource rooms generally display similar layouts, with a reception and waiting area, rows of computers with each computer in an individual cubicle to provide customers some privacy, work tables, telephones, and a library or other area for hard-copy materials. In general, the settings are professional and comfortable. However, centers can become overly crowded during peak times, leading to somewhat cramped conditions and waits for computers. To address the problem of demand for computers exceeding supply, centers impose time limits on computer usage, but this deters access. In some instances, security is a concern, a problem that some centers have dealt with by hiring security guards.

Centers make special efforts to accommodate a broad range of customers with special needs; while very helpful, these efforts are not always able to overcome the barriers to access that customers encounter. All centers have made accommodations to their physical settings and offer assistive technology to facilitate access for persons with disabilities. However, resource room staff report that assistive technology is rarely used; hence, in some areas the equipment is sometimes stored away until the need for it presents itself, and resource room staff are not very familiar with its use. The special expertise offered by the Disability Program Navigator or Vocational Rehabilitation staff is therefore critical. Other special needs populations include those with limited English proficiency, limited literacy, or limited expertise in using computers. Some centers make special efforts to accommodate such individuals, such as translated materials or workshops given in different languages for non-English speakers and binders with written instructions for those lacking computer literacy. However, in most centers these efforts do not seem adequate to facilitate access for those with these special needs. In particular, having a resource room that is mainly technology-based means that some customers will flounder, because the center cannot provide the staff assistance they need.

Tracking Systems

Both locally based and statewide tracking systems are in evidence in the sites studied. Each system has its own advantages and disadvantages. Statewide systems are especially convenient for creating online databases to facilitate matching between job seekers and employers and for measuring participants' employment outcomes. However, because tracking the use of local self-services is not their primary function, usage data can be absent or incomplete. By contrast, local systems are generally more comprehensive in tracking usage, but reliance on them often requires additional data entry to support the registration of customers in the state ES job system and provides no ready means for measuring employment outcomes.

Regardless of the system, tracking assists One-Stop Career Center staff in managing center resources efficiently and identifying customers in need of staff assistance. Monthly and quarterly reports that state and local staff generate from their tracking systems have been beneficial in allowing them to understand customer service usage patterns. This information has helped centers to schedule services and staff during times when resource room services are most used. Furthermore, state and local tracking systems that require customers to provide at least basic personal information about themselves—particularly information about disability status, offender status, housing status, and the like—help staff better understand customers’ barriers to employment, identify those in need of intensive or training services, and expedite referrals to partner agencies for appropriate services.

Notwithstanding its considerable advantages, tracking can be burdensome and costly, and the data captured are not always of high quality. Swipe-card or scan-card systems are the commonly used methods of tracking and they are not especially burdensome for staff or customers to use. Still, some centers report that data entry can be a problem, especially during times of heavy center usage, when data entry can become spotty or error-prone. Furthermore, information on service usage is inexact (most systems record, at best, the service the customer intends to use rather than the services he or she actually uses), service codes are applied inconsistently (making the data that is collected difficult to use), and information on outcomes is virtually non-existent. Furthermore, tracking systems can be costly to operate, with equipment leasing and programming support running from \$10,000 to several times that amount per year. Citing these limitations, as well as problems with equipment malfunctions and lost swipe cards, one LWIA abandoned its tracking system midway through the study.

Who Uses Self-Services?

In most LWIAs, the number of customers who only receive self-services is far greater than the number who go on to receive WIA staff-assisted services; the high volume of self-service customers can sometimes strain the capacity of the system to provide quality services. The ratio of the number of self-service users overall to those receiving WIA staff assistance reaches as high as 50:1 in some LWIAs. During peak times, waiting lists are developed to regulate customer flow, and the amount of time staff can spend answering any one customer’s questions is severely constrained. Moreover, customer flow is uneven across a twelve-month period, potentially posing additional challenges in the area of resource management.

In comparison to those who receive staff-assisted services from the WIA adult program, self-service users as a whole have characteristics that would seem to make it somewhat more difficult for them to find jobs. Self-service users tend to be younger or older (less likely to be middle-

aged), have lower levels of education (more likely to be high school dropouts), and have lower pre-program earnings. There are also some demographic differences between the two populations; in particular, female self-service users are much more likely than their male counterparts to go on to receive staff-assisted services.

Patterns of Usage

The typical customer uses resource room services just once during a 12-month period, but repeat users make up a significant portion of all person-days of usage. About 55 percent of self-service customers visit the resource room just once in a 12-month period. At the other extreme, about six percent of customers visit more than ten times in a year. But the latter group accounts for nearly 40 percent of the resource room's total number of visits in a year.

Overwhelming majorities of self-service users use resource rooms to look for a job or access other services associated with job search (e.g., preparing a resume), but appreciable numbers also have broader aims, such as researching career options or researching training providers. Thus, customers access a wide range of the resources that One-Stop Career Centers have developed to aid in career development.

Nearly all services are rated as quite helpful or very helpful by at least half of the customers who access them, but the services used most often are the ones that receive the lowest ratings of helpfulness. The service with the highest favorability rating was getting help with preparing a resume, with 69 percent of customers who accessed this service rating it as quite or very helpful. However, only 35 percent of customers used this service. Similarly, 66 percent of those who accessed a service focused on improving their basic skills rated the service favorably, but only 10 percent of customers used this service. At the other end of the scale, looking for current job openings—the service used by the most customers (79 percent)—had the lowest helpfulness rating, with 41 percent of users rating it quite or very helpful.

One-Stop Career Centers do a good job of facilitating access, according to the vast majority of resource room customers, including those with disabilities. Customers report few problems with resource room technology, the centers' hours of operation, or accessing workshops they would like to attend. The biggest complaint was not receiving adequate staff assistance, which was mentioned as a moderate or major problem by about 20 percent of customers.

Staff Assistance for Self-Service Customers

Most centers have a minimum of one or two staff working in the resource room at all times, but staffing arrangements differ. In about half the sites, the resource room is typically staffed by

those who have this duty as their full-time job. In other sites, rotating, as-needed, or temporary staff are used. The latter include participants in the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), TANF participants, college interns, and WIA youth participants. In the largest number of sites, the majority of the resource room staff are funded by WIA or Wagner-Peyser. However, other sources of funding for staff can also be important, including the SCSEP program, TANF, community colleges, Job Corps, adult education, and others.

Contrary to the expectation that job seekers would use self-service tools and resources independently, most customers need a considerable amount of assistance to use these tools effectively. At the very least, every customer receives an orientation to resource room services, conducted either informally in a one-on-one session (in most centers) or as a formal group orientation session. Additionally, resource room staff provide ongoing one-on-one assistance, particularly helping customers with using computers and providing basic job search assistance. In assisting self-service customers, many resource room staff try to empower customers to do things on their own, not only to give customers a stronger foundation for career development, but also to mitigate the challenges posed by often-inadequate staffing.

Resource room staff see the need for additional staff as a pressing challenge. In many centers, center managers wanted more staff to provide general assistance; in a few other centers, they cited a need for staff to have specific skills, such as fluency in a language other than English or expertise in mental health counseling. The primary reason cited for inadequate staffing was decreased funding from both WIA and Wagner-Peyser, which has resulted in staff layoffs or no replacement of staff who have left or retired. Low wages, high workloads, and stress were cited as contributing to high staff turnover, aggravating problems of inadequate staffing and a general lack of experience among resource room staff.

Resources and Tools

One-Stop Career Centers provide an array of high-quality publicly-funded and commercially developed tools for resource room use. These tools focus on assessment and career planning, information about education and training opportunities, labor market information, development of pre-vocational skills, job listings and matching, and job search assistance. As a whole, these tools are offered in a variety of formats, including electronic delivery and print, and some are accessed through workshops. However, electronic resources predominate.

The rich array of tools available electronically is at once a strength and a challenge. The tools and resources available in the resource rooms provide rich information in a readily accessible electronic format. However, because many of the resources are available only electronically, centers encounter a challenge in providing sufficient assistance to customers who lack computer

literacy. Moreover, having so many tools, web pages, and links available can overwhelm customers in the job search process: customers are not always sure about which tools are most appropriate for addressing their needs and staff are not always available to provide clarity.

For these reasons, options for self-service delivery and knowledgeable and accessible staff are integral to serving customers well. When resources are available in diverse formats and staff are accessible, centers are better able to serve customers with diverse needs, learning styles, and levels of computer savvy.

Employment Outcomes and Customer Satisfaction

Self-service customers generally record lower outcomes on the common measures—the entered employment rate, the retention rate, and average earnings—than do customers receiving staff-assistance from the WIA adult program. Self-service users record entered employment rates that range from a few percentage points lower to 30 or more percentage points lower than WIA exiters, depending on the proxy used for measuring the entered-employment statistic and the particular LWIA whose performance is being charted. The gap in retention rates between the two groups is consistently smaller, amounting to between five and twelve percentage points, with self-service customers again recording the disadvantage. Self-service customers also record lower average earnings (the sum of earnings in the second and third quarters after receiving services) than WIA exiters by about \$2,000 in two of the three LWIAs providing data.

However, the experience of New York State suggests that high performance among self-service users is possible. New York State recorded a sharp drop in performance on EER for WIA adults when resource room customers became registered in WIA in large numbers. However, the state's performance has since rebounded, suggesting that high performance on the common measures is possible for self-service customers. The state's experience deserves greater scrutiny because of its potential for replication elsewhere.

Customers who find a job after using resource room services usually do not credit the services they received as having helped them find the job. Only about 28 percent of respondents in the customer survey who had found a job several months after they used resource room services rated the center's services as either quite helpful or extremely helpful to them in finding the job. By contrast, 48 percent reported that the services were not at all helpful, and another 24 percent reported them as only somewhat helpful. Clearly, finding jobs for the workforce system's customers represents a substantial challenge.

Ratings of helpfulness using the American Customer Satisfaction Index show that, on average, self-service customers rate resource room services as somewhat more favorable than neutral.

Satisfaction with services receives a score of 66 (on a 100-point scale), how well services compare with the ideal receives a score of 59, and whether services meet expectations receives a score of 58. A weighted average of the three yields a score of 61. In comparison, customers receiving WIA staff-assisted services give a score on the weighted index of 79, according to recently published performance results for the WIA program.

Conclusions

Overall, the results demonstrate the considerable potential of the self-service delivery system to reach large numbers of customers and to facilitate their access to an array of resources and tools that can assist them in conducting a job search and exploring career options. Resource rooms offer comfortable and inviting environments, and staff are professional and do their best to be helpful. The service offerings are rich, and customers generally rate the services they use favorably.

At the same time, the self-service system is under strain. To some extent, this comes about because of the sheer numbers of customers seeking services, which can swamp centers' capacity, at least at peak times. But, additionally, there is to some degree a mismatch between the goals of and philosophy behind self-services and the reality of the needs of the customers seeking services. As one administrator put it, "The people who really can do self-services aren't coming here; they don't use us. We see the people who have problems." These problems, for many, include poor preparation for work, limited English proficiency, poor literacy skills, and an unfamiliarity with or fear of using computers—all factors that make self-services difficult for them. Additional resource room staffing might help these customers get more out of self-services, but funding limitations make this infeasible and, moreover, relying too heavily on staff assistance runs against the grain of what self-services are supposed to be about. At the very least, One-Stop Career Centers need to do much more to enhance the computer literacy skills of their customers for the customers to be able to access electronic resources effectively on their own.

These challenges notwithstanding, self-services have clearly become a fundamental part of the public workforce investment system, and their ability to provide access to useful resources and information tools for large numbers of customers is substantial. As one customer put it, "Despite my objections and criticisms I may have about this place, without it I would not have any hope of finding anything. I would also have nowhere to go most days and no purpose. This place is truly needed!"

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I. INTRODUCTION

In an effort to expand its reach while containing costs, the public workforce investment system has increasingly come to rely on self-services—that is, those tools and resources that customers can use on their own or with minimal staff assistance. In an effort to learn more about self-services, including what resources are available, how they are used, and what outcomes follow their use, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) funded Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) to conduct an implementation and outcomes study of self-services at One-Stop Career Centers. The evaluation, titled *Evaluation of One-Stop Self-Services*, has focused on on-site use of self-services and has these major components:

- A survey of local workforce investment areas (LWIAs).
- Site visits to 22 LWIAs in 11 states.
- Surveys of customers of One-Stop Career Center self-services.
- A quantitative analysis of administrative data, including:
 - Data provided by nine LWIAs from their self-services tracking systems.
 - Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage data and claimant data provided by two states.

Results from the local-area surveys were described in two earlier reports, and preliminary findings from the site visits and analysis of administrative data were described in an interim report issued in December 2007.¹ This final report updates and extends those findings by describing results from the most recent round of site visits, the customer surveys, and the administrative data.

¹ See R. D’Amico, *Findings from the Local-Area Survey of One-Stop Self-Services* (Social Policy Research Associates, 2003); R. D’Amico, *Results from the Second Local-Area Survey of One-Stop Self-Services* (Social Policy Research Associates, 2006); and R. D’Amico, A. Goger, M. Magnotta, J. Pearlman, D. Rojas, and A. Wiegand, *Preliminary Findings from a Study of One-Stop Self-Services* (Social Policy Research Associates, 2007).

This chapter presents a background discussion of why self-services have become such a critical component of the public workforce investment system. It next describes the study design and data collection, and concludes with a description of what follows in subsequent chapters.

Background

Facilitating the matching of job seekers with available jobs so as to improve the efficiency of the labor market has long been an important government function. Indeed, its history in the U.S. spans many decades. First authorized by the Wagner-Peyser Act of 1933, labor exchange services have been available since then without eligibility restrictions or charge to both employers and job seekers.

The value of public labor exchange services has continued to be recognized even in the recent era of privatization and questioning of government involvement in the economy. In their broad review of the realms within which government action can be justified on the grounds of economic efficiency, the Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph E. Stiglitz and his colleagues identify circumstances in which government action seems appropriate (“green-light” principles), and others where caution or restraint are in order (“yellow-light” or “red-light” principles). Applying this framework, these scholars conclude that the Department of Labor’s public labor exchange functions “seem consistent with the principles for government action.”²

While the need for public labor exchange services has continued to be recognized, their mode of delivery has undergone an important change: self-services have become an increasingly important part of the way that job seekers access services, complementing the staff-assisted services that tended to predominate in earlier years. A number of factors underly this trend:

- Funding for Wagner-Peyser services has steadily declined in real-dollar terms since the late 1970s.³ The Employment Service (ES), funded by Wagner-Peyser, has historically been a leader in developing career planning and assessment tools, and the agency employed many certified counselors to administer and interpret test results and counsel

² Stiglitz and colleagues start from the premise that the advancement of information technology raises important concerns regarding the encroachment of government functions in realms better left to the private sector. Accordingly, they delineate ten principles for determining whether or not government action can be justified on efficiency grounds. Based on these principles, they concluded that America’s Job Bank—a federally supported web site with job vacancy postings (America’s Job Bank has since been discontinued)—was a reasonable and appropriate realm for government action. Drawing on their logic, it appears that One-Stop self-service functions could be justified on similar grounds. See J. Stiglitz, P. Orszag, and J. Orszag, *The Role of Government in a Digital Age* (paper commissioned by the Computer and Communications Industry Association, 2004).

³ David Smole estimates that funding for Wagner-Peyser services declined by about one-third in real dollar terms from 1984 to the end of the century. See D. Smole, “Labor Exchange Performance Measurement,” pp. 101-133 in D. Balducchi, R. Eberts, and C O’Leary (eds.) *Labor Exchange Policy in the United States* (Kalamazoo, MI: W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 2004).

job seekers. However, the funding cutbacks in the face of the steady volume of customers needing assistance have made such staff-intensive services difficult to sustain.

- The trend among states toward allowing UI claimants to file their claims remotely has removed UI operations from local offices, leading to a further shrinkage of outstationed employment security staff.⁴
- The technological revolution has facilitated the development and dissemination of a wealth of information accessible to job seekers without staff assistance. Drawing on these developments, federal and state investments in electronic informational resources have mushroomed.⁵
- The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) reinforced the promise of self-services as a strategy for meeting the public workforce system's goals by requiring that all LWIAs make self-services available as part of their menu of service offerings.
- Cultural shifts, reflected in WIA, have placed greater emphasis on empowering customers to take charge of their own career development strategies, while also emphasizing the importance of their assuming greater personal responsibility.

In light of these developments, self-services have become a critical means for ensuring universal access to an array of high-quality resources and information tools that customers can use to make informed career decisions.

Nonetheless, at present little is known about customers' use of self-service tools and resources, including who uses these services, how frequently, for what reasons, and with what effect. Indeed, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) has noted that, by largely excluding self-service customers, the WIA reporting system can shed little light on the experiences of those who likely make up the largest pool of customers of publicly funded workforce services.⁶

Recognizing this limitation, DOL has taken numerous steps to improve the accuracy and comprehensiveness of reporting in recent years. For example, its proposed specifications for the new WISPR (Workforce Investment Streamlined Performance Reporting) make clear that states should be prepared to submit client-level records for all those who receive self-services or

⁴ For early evidence see J. Salzman, K. Dickinson, R. Fedrau, and M. Lazarin, *Unemployment Insurance in the One-Stop System* (Social Policy Research Associates, 1999). For more recent evidence, see B. Barnow and C. King, *The Workforce Investment Act in Eight States* (The Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government, 2005).

⁵ N. Ridley and W. A. Tracy, "State and Local Labor Exchange Services," in Balducchi, et al. (op. cit.).

⁶ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Workforce Investment Act: Additional Actions Would Further Improve the Workforce System*. Testimony of Sigurd Nelson, GAO-07-1051T (2007).

informational services financially assisted by One-Stop Career Center employment and workforce information programs.⁷

In the interim, though, information about self-service customers remains quite limited. SPR's *Evaluation of One-Stop Self-Services* is intended to help fill some gaps. Key research questions that the evaluation addresses are these:

- What types of self-service tools and resources are available to job-seeking customers and employers?
- How do One-Stop Career Centers facilitate access and ensure that their resource rooms—where centers typically locate their on-site self-service tools and resources—can accommodate those with special needs? How are customers assisted with self-services?
- How do LWIAs track customer usage of self-services?
- What are the characteristics of customers who use self-services at One-Stop Career Centers? What is their pattern of usage?
- What do customers think about their experiences in using self-services? What resources and tools do they find most helpful?
- What employment outcomes are associated with self-service usage? How does this compare to the outcomes of those who receive staff-assisted services?

Data Collection as Part of the Evaluation

As the list of study questions enumerated above makes clear, key objectives of the evaluation focus on understanding who uses One-Stop Career Center self-services and characterizing the volume of usage. To shed light on these issues, the evaluation has focused on LWIAs that asserted that they had systems in place to comprehensively track *all* customers who accessed self-services on-site and could provide basic information about these customers, including, at a minimum, demographic information, identifying information (such as Social Security Numbers, names, and addresses⁸), and the dates on which services were accessed. To identify such areas, as well as to profile One-Stop Career Center self-services nationwide, a Local-Area Survey of One-Stop Self-Services was administered in 2003 to LWIAs in each of the 50 states and the

⁷ The WISPR was expected to be phased in for program year (PY) 2009, but DOL has delayed its use so that the workforce investment system could focus on supporting the implementation of workforce provisions of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). However, two states, Pennsylvania and Texas, agreed to provide WISPR client-level data to DOL on a pilot basis, even though doing so is not yet technically required.

⁸ Social Security Numbers (SSNs) were needed because the evaluation team endeavored to match SSNs with state Unemployment Insurance wage files, so that the outcomes of self-service users could be examined. Similarly, names and contact information were to be used in conducting a survey of self-service users.

District of Columbia. A follow-up survey was administered to these LWIAs in 2005–2006, to profile changes in their self-services systems.

Based on the 2003 survey results, it was determined that 69 LWIAs could potentially meet the data requirements of this study. However, upon further scrutiny, the number of LWIAs deemed appropriate dropped appreciably, for the following reasons:

- *Tracking was often less complete than first claimed.* Although many LWIAs self-reported that they tracked all on-site users, telephone or in-person follow-up discussions conducted with these sites revealed that many customers commonly eluded tracking.
- *Data systems were difficult to use.* Some sites maintain only paper records (e.g., sign-in sheets), which were deemed too cumbersome to be used by the evaluation team efficiently.
- *Confidentiality concerns precluded data sharing.* Some LWIAs that otherwise would have met the study's conditions were unwilling to share data due to confidentiality concerns.
- *State Unemployment Insurance wage data were unavailable.* To meet the full objectives of this study, Social Security Numbers of self-services customers were to be matched with state Unemployment Insurance wage data so that employment outcomes associated with self-service usage could be identified. In some cases, an LWIA might have been willing to provide data on its self-service customers, but the state proved unwilling to provide UI wage data to match to the service data, so the LWIA was dropped from the sample.⁹

Because of these stumbling blocks, only nine LWIAs in three states were both appropriate for the study and willing to provide self-service usage data. These included six in California, one in Pennsylvania, and two in Texas. Each of these LWIAs provided a complete dump of data for its self-service users for at least a nine-month period, and some provided data for more than a two-year period. These data cover some part of the period from May 2004 through December 2006, with the precise period varying from LWIA to LWIA.

Additionally, we conducted site visits to most of these LWIAs¹⁰ and to others that seemed to have comprehensive tracking systems in place; the latter were added so that the study could provide a more comprehensive look at self-services tracking systems across the nation. These additional LWIAs include ones in Colorado, Georgia, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Missouri, New York, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, and Washington. Altogether, then, site-visit data

⁹ In fact, only two states provided UI wage data. A third agreed to do so, but contractual difficulties in negotiating data access could not be resolved.

¹⁰ One LWIA in California that provided self-service usage data (San Diego) was unable to accommodate a site visit during the period of the study's site-visit data collection.

were collected from 22 LWIAs in 11 states, with the site visits conducted in two rounds: the first in 2004 and the second in 2008. These qualitative data are used to complement the quantitative data for the nine LWIAs providing self-service usage data. This report focuses on findings from the most recent round of site visits, as they provide the most up-to-date evidence, though observations from the earlier round are sometimes worked in to communicate a pertinent finding or example.

The project also endeavored to learn more about customers' experiences in using self-services, so the project team administered a survey of self-service users in five LWIAs. These LWIAs were among the nine that provided self-service usage data. Because the LWIAs provided their usage data at different times, the surveys of customers were administered at different times as well so that the survey would be administered shortly after each customer's usage. Thus, surveys of customers in two LWIAs were administered in 2005, and for those in the three remaining LWIAs in 2007. Details on the survey administration process are described in the appendix.

Another key data source is UI wage data, which was collected from state UI agencies covering self-service users in three LWIAs in two states.¹¹ Operationally, the project team first received the self-service usage data from these LWIAs, extracted the SSNs and transmitted them to the state UI agency, and took receipt of the UI wage data in return. The UI wage data cover at least four quarters before and up to four quarters after each customer's use of self-services, and are used to measure customers' outcomes and changes in earnings over time.

Exhibit I-1 summarizes the various data collection activities undertaken as part of this evaluation, and it shows which LWIAs and states contributed which of the pieces of data described above.

Limitations of the Data Collection and Analysis

As Exhibit I-1 makes clear, the project has complete data for only a small number of LWIAs. One primary reason for this, as described earlier in this chapter, is that the study design required that the universe of LWIAs from which data were to be drawn should be restricted to those that had comprehensive tracking systems in place. The results of the LWIA surveys, to be described in more detail later in this report, revealed that relatively few LWIAs in the nation met this requirement, severely restricting the pool of LWIAs from which we could draw.

¹¹ We endeavored to collect UI wage data for each of the nine LWIAs that provided us with self-service usage data. However, California's state Employment Development Department declined our request to provide these data, citing confidentiality concerns, so we lack these data for the LWIAs in California.

**Exhibit I-1:
Data Collection Undertaken as Part of the Evaluation**

	Site Visits		Self-Service Usage Data for:	Customer Survey Data	UI Wage Data
	2004	2008			
California					
Alameda County		√	9/05 to 12/06		
Oakland		√	9/05 to 12/06		
Richmond		√	9/05 to 12/06		
Riverside		√	10/04 to 9/06	√	
Sacramento		√	11/05 to 10/06	√	
San Diego			10/04 to 9/06		
Colorado					
Boulder		√			
Georgia					
Fulton County		√			
Louisiana					
Ouachita Parish	√				
Rapides Parish	√				
Massachusetts					
Metro South		√			
Missouri					
Kansas City	√				
Southeast	√				
Jefferson Franklin	√				
New York					
Chemung/Schuyler	√				
Oyster Bay	√	√			
Pennsylvania					
Philadelphia	√	√	1/06 to 9/06	√	√
Westmoreland	√				
South Carolina					
Trident		√			
Texas					
Brazos Valley	√	√	5/04 to 10/06	√	√
South Plains	√	√	5/04 to 10/06	√	√
Upper Rio	√				
Washington					
Olympic		√			

Additionally, the project team encountered extreme difficulties in getting data extracts prepared by the qualifying LWIAs and their applicable state UI agencies. By far the most prominent reasons why other LWIAs and states declined to provide data was a concern about releasing information with personal identifiers appended, especially given that customers would not have provided their consent.

Further complicating matters, new Federal regulations were issued mid-way through data collection that imposed new procedures and requirements on state UI agencies asked to provide data to third-party researchers acting on behalf of federal agencies.¹² These rules required new layers of review and approval, including the requirement that DOL be a party to any data sharing agreement, and there simply was not time to work through the implications of these new requirements before the study's data collection drew to a close.

For all these reasons, the quantitative results on patterns of self-service usage described in this report pertain only to the small number of LWIAs that provided data, most of which are in heavily urban areas. Therefore, the study's findings cannot be construed as generalizing to the national One-Stop Career Center system. Instead, they provide case-study snapshots of customer usage and outcomes in selected LWIAs.

Interpretation of the findings is further complicated because LWIAs have different operational definitions as to what constitutes self-services and, specifically, where the dividing line between self-services and staff-assisted services is drawn. Although the WIA legislation makes an important distinction between the two—customers classified as receiving WIA staff-assisted services are subject to WIA's performance measures, while those receiving self-services are not¹³—in fact the degree of staff assistance that customers receive in using One-Stop Career Center services might really best be thought of as a gradient, an issue that Chapter II of this report discusses in more detail. Given this murkiness, LWIAs exercise some discretion in classifying services as self-services or not, and this impacts the activities that are the subject of this report.

Finally, the availability of many One-Stop delivery system self-services via the Internet means that many self-service customers may access these services remotely, from their homes, offices, or other locations, rather than on-site at a One-Stop Career Center. The profiles of customer usage and outcomes presented in this report are applicable only to that subset of users who access services on-site.

¹² See 20 CFR 603, issued on September 27, 2006 in the Federal Register (pp. 56830-56848).

¹³ See the WIA legislation, as well as DOL's Training and Employment Guidance Letter 17-05.

Overview of this Report

With this brief background in mind, the next chapter presents a discussion of what it is that LWIAs mean when they describe self-services; this discussion identifies the broad boundaries established for this study. Chapter III presents a summary of results from the Local-Area Survey of One-Stop Self-Services, which provides a national context regarding the scope and content of self-services. Chapter IV next discusses ways in which One-Stop Career Centers facilitate access to services, such as marketing center services and accommodating customers with special needs.

Since much of the analysis in this report is drawn from LWIAs that comprehensively track self-service usage, Chapter V describes the tracking systems used by the LWIAs that provided data. Drawing on these data, as well as the customer survey, Chapter VI profiles the characteristics of customers who use services, and Chapter VII describes their usage patterns, including what services they use and how satisfied they are with them. Chapter VIII uses qualitative data from the site visits to describe how customers are assisted with using self-services, and Chapter IX describes self-service tools and resources in more detail, including what services are offered and in what format. Chapter X then presents outcomes experienced by customers who use self-services, based on UI wage data and results from the customer survey, and Chapter XI presents a summary and conclusions.

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II. WHAT ARE SELF-SERVICES?

Taken literally, the term “self-services” suggests that customers serve themselves by working independently in resource rooms or via Internet connections. Yet, in practice, most customers who access self-services at One-Stop Career Centers need some sort of assistance to use the tools and resources effectively. This chapter unpacks the self-services concept and explores the underlying tensions that local areas struggle with when translating the theory into practice. It also describes the effect of the WIA registration process on who remains in the pool of self-services customers and presents the integrated services model adopted by some LWIAs. Considering these topics helps in understanding what is meant by self-service and who gets classified as a self-services customer.

Self-Services: Theory vs. Practice

With its promise of allowing One-Stop Career Centers to efficiently serve the majority of customers with minimal staff assistance, the self-services concept was put forward in WIA as the central means by which the public workforce investment system could provide cost-effective but widespread access to a wealth of useful information and tools. Self-services would satisfy the needs of the universal customer while freeing up staff to work with customers who required staff assistance. The regulations define self-services as follows:

Self-service and informational activities are those core services that are made available and accessible to the general public, that are designed to inform and educate individuals about the labor market and their employment strengths, weaknesses, and the range of services appropriate to their situation, and that do not require significant staff involvement with the individual in terms of resources or time (20 CFR §666.140 (a) (2)).

The One-Stop Career Center staff interviewed as part of this study were well aware of the regulatory WIA definition of self-services, and they understood the role that the legislation intended for them to play in the resource room. They described the theoretical self-service customer as one who is “independent,” “self-directed,” and “autonomous.” Further, they perceived their own role to be that of facilitator of access to services in the resource room. As

one worker put it, “There has been a philosophical shift from ‘we will do it for you’ to ‘we will help you do it yourself.’”

Yet, when staff spoke frankly about their experiences with customers in the resource room, they communicated the feeling that the term ‘self-services’ was something of a misnomer. They noted that many customers entering the One-Stop Career Center could not use the resource room effectively without a considerable measure of staff assistance. This sentiment is indicative of the underlying difficulty of translating the theory of self-services into practice.

One of the major stumbling blocks that resource room staff encounter in implementing the self-services concept is that the customers they work with generally have undeveloped skills and limited knowledge in a number of important areas. In particular, customers’ lack of computer skills was identified as a significant barrier. Many customers are apparently extremely intimidated by computers and are resistant to using them without assistance. Confirming this notion, many self-service customers interviewed for this study said that they did not have an email account until the local staff helped them set one up, and that they were learning how to use the computer for the first time.

Staff are also faced with the substantial task of assisting the large number of customers who lack basic skills or adequate language skills. For example, many self-services customers struggle with spelling and presentation skills when crafting resumes and cover letters. Individuals for whom English is not their first language also appear to require specialized one-on-one assistance. For example, at a One-Stop Career Center with a large percentage of monolingual Spanish-speaking customers, staff translate customers’ resumes into English and even write their cover letters for them. All of this assistance was, at the time the site visit was conducted, considered ‘self-service’ by this LWIA.

Still other customers require motivational or emotional support. For example, some customers may visit the One-Stop Career Center because they are directed to by another state agency or social service provider, and not necessarily because they are motivated to seek immediate employment. Such customers often seek staff members’ help in “meeting the requirements.” Others require encouragement to boost their shaky self-confidence. As one site administrator remarked, “For people here, it is about hand-holding.” He also said that the high levels of substance abuse and domestic violence in his local area make it difficult for many self-service customers to be successful in job search without substantial staff follow-through and referral to other services.

Thus, consistent with results reported as part of SPR's earlier *Evaluation of the Implementation of WIA*,¹ self-service customers are sometimes receiving noteworthy levels of staff assistance, and, accordingly, the term "self-services" under-represents to some degree the crucial role that staff play in increasing the capacity of customers to function better on their own.

At the same time, practical constraints severely limit the level of staff support that can be provided to resource room customers. Administrators and staff at many of the One-Stop Career Centers visited for this study emphasized that the sheer volume of customers that the resource rooms handle, and the customers' considerable needs, severely tax the ability of the centers to provide the level of staff assistance that customers need to have a reasonable expectation of success in their searches for employment. Thus, resource room staff at many centers limit the amount of time they spend with any one customer, or refuse to answer questions beyond basic ones, such as how to log on to the state's ES jobs system.

Clearly, then, LWIAs encounter a palpable tension between the concept of self-services and the reality of their resource room customers' considerable needs, with resource and staffing constraints providing something of a practical brake on the level of service that can be offered.

How Self-Services are Classified

As the discussion presented thus far suggests, the degree of staff assistance provided to One-Stop Career Center customers constitutes a continuum, with nearly all customers receiving at least some staff assistance (e.g., an orientation to resource room tools and resources, help logging on to the state's ES job bank, etc.) and most undergoing an initial assessment ascertaining their need for staff-intensive services. This implies that the dividing line between self-services and staff-assisted services is inherently ambiguous and difficult to draw. If all resource-room customers receive at least some staff assistance, when do they receive so much assistance that calling them self-service customers no longer makes sense?

Earlier studies make clear that LWIAs differ in how they make this judgement,² and findings in this study confirm this conclusion. For example, in several of the study's LWIAs, a customer's attendance at one or more workshops (e.g., on job search or interviewing techniques) is required before enrollment in WIA staff-assisted services will be considered. In other LWIAs, by contrast, all the center's workshops are themselves classified as staff-assisted services, so attendance in any one of them automatically triggers registration in WIA staff-assisted services.

¹ Social Policy Research Associates, *The Workforce Investment Act After Five Years: Results from the National Evaluation of the Implementation of WIA* (2004).

² Ibid.

DOL's Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 17-05 aims to establish some uniformity across LWIAs as to what constitutes "significant staff involvement" for purposes of defining WIA staff-assisted services. By aiming to limit the amount of staff assistance that can be provided to those who remain classified as self-service customers, this guidance has promoted somewhat greater uniformity across LWIAs. But some variability nonetheless remains. The integrated services model presented later in this chapter provides dramatic evidence of this variability.

The Client-Flow Process

Who counts as a self-services customer clearly depends on how each LWIA classifies its services. Important too is the process an LWIA uses for determining how customers shall be pulled out of the self-services pool to receive WIA staff-assisted services, as this determines the characteristics of those who remain in the pool.

In the first instance, of course, the pool of people who receive only self-services is determined by who comes into the One-Stop Career Center to access services to begin with. Who makes up this pool is in turn influenced by the characteristics of persons in the local workforce area in need of workforce development services, where sites chose to locate their centers, and outreach mechanisms that sites use to attract customers. Some of these factors are discussed more fully in Chapter IV.

The way in which a local area selects people from this pool and enrolls them into WIA staff-assisted services determines the make-up of those who remain a self-service customer. Most of the sites visited as part of the study have invested considerable effort in identifying the type of customer that they wish to classify as receiving staff-assisted services, since these customers constitute the pool that is subject to WIA performance measures (and, until the issuance of revised performance instructions for Wagner-Peyser programs in TEGL 17-05, for ES performance as well). The categorization of services and the subsequent design of the customer-flow process generally occur through a collaborative strategic planning process involving the local workforce investment board, the One-Stop operators, and frontline staff. In many cases, outside consultants, state staff, or regional DOL representatives are also involved in the local program design phase. Once these policies are decided upon, it is up to frontline staff (in most areas) to make registration decisions, although these decisions may be subject to approval or veto by managers or committees.

The first step in the planning process is typically for the local area to clarify the service categories established by the WIA legislation. The tiered approach to service delivery defined in WIA includes three categories of services: core, intensive, and training. Core services include "self-services," the main focus of this report. Staff-assisted core, intensive, and training services,

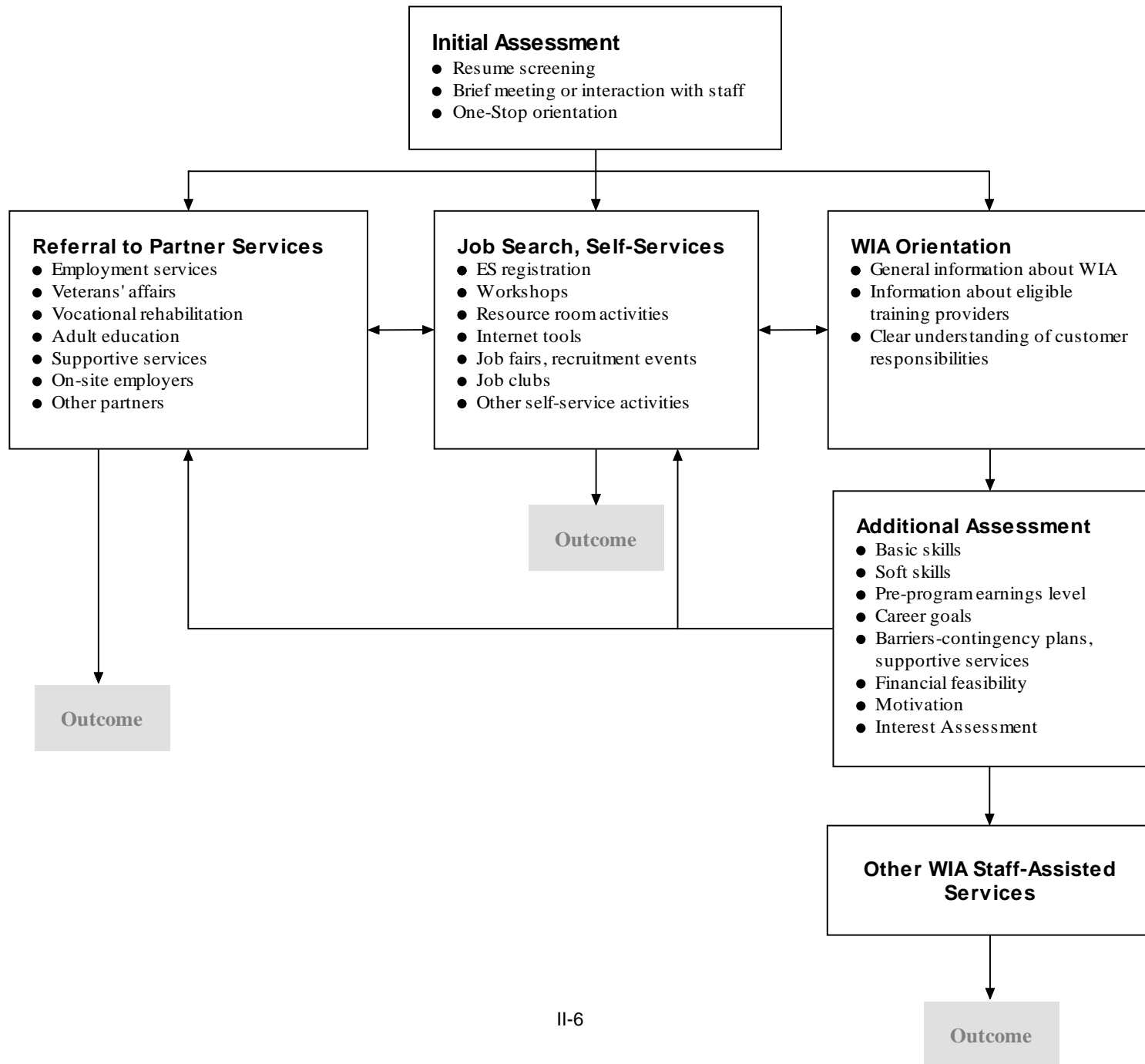
on the other hand, enable local areas to spend more resources on those who are determined eligible and in need of such services.

Elaborating the tiered structure that is built into WIA legislation, many local areas have further refined the categories of services as a way of clarifying service delivery protocols and formalizing the decision process. For example, at one One-Stop Career Center, resource room staff place all new customers in an initial assessment level of A, B, or C depending on their job readiness. Level-A customers are those who appear to be job-ready; once they have been placed in this category, they are oriented to the core services available. These customers are considered true self-service customers who do not require staff assistance. Level B consists of those customers who are unable to use self-services on their own but still may not need WIA intensive or training services in order to find a job. Level-B customers are placed into three subgroups: 1) customers who lack job searching skills; 2) customers who lack job skills; and 3) customers with inconsistent work histories. All three subgroups are referred to the Resource Specialist for one-on-one help in using self-services. Customers placed in Level C are individuals who are considered to have the highest need for WIA intensive services or training.

The next step in the process of making enrollment decisions is for the local area to design a customer flow model, a set of protocols that clarifies the process by which customers are sent onto service paths that are appropriate for their needs, including WIA services and other One-Stop partner services. For WIA programs, the customer flow model is the mechanism for selecting customers out of the self-services pool who are eligible and suitable for more intensive services. Actual customer flow varies, depending on how the service categories are defined; thus, the specific triggers that track a customer in one direction or another may be very different from place to place. Yet, at a general level, customer flow processes tend to follow a common pattern, which is depicted in Exhibit II-1.

The essence of this flow is a screening process, during which customers are assessed in their suitability and eligibility for WIA staff-assisted services. Respondents that we spoke with say that having customers go through the WIA screening process serves multiple purposes. First, it ensures that the customer is motivated enough to continue pursuing the opportunities that WIA services offer. Second, it provides the customer with a thorough understanding of the expectations of the program. Third, it allows staff to test the customer's skills and better understand his or her characteristics and circumstances, thereby making possible a more accurate determination of eligibility and suitability. Finally, it allows local areas to keep their caseloads manageable within the bounds of their funding allocations.

Exhibit II-1: Typical Customer Flow for Self-Services and WIA Services



The WIA screening process commonly occurs after an initial assessment phase occurring very soon after the customer enters the One-Stop Career Center for the first time. During the initial assessment, customers are tracked onto a service path that is seen as being most appropriate based on the customer's needs and the services available. For example, one state recommends to all of its One-Stop Career Centers that new customers meet with a resource room staff member for a 15-minute "triage" process to determine which services are appropriate and assess the customer's potential for further WIA services. In a local area in another state, frontline staff review all new applicants on the state's employment website (which includes offsite as well as on-site customers). Customers who seem appropriate for WIA are then contacted and appointments are made to proceed with the WIA screening process.

A customer may also be tracked to the WIA screening process after spending some time as a self-service customer conducting a job search. Often, this occurs when frontline staff realize that WIA staff-assisted services may be appropriate for a customer who is having little success finding employment with self-services alone. For example, a resource room staff member in one local area said that customers are more likely to receive staff-assisted services the longer they remain unemployed while still showing persistence in using resource room resources. In a similar vein, many respondents said that a customer is often shifted to staff-assisted services when staff "happen to catch a customer struggling" in the resource room or during a workshop and conclude that the customer may need additional assistance.

Based on the results of the screening, an enrollment decision is made by frontline staff, managers, or a committee, depending on the local area. At one One-Stop Career Center visited, a committee of case managers and One-Stop partner agency representatives reviews the WIA applications and votes on whether to register each new applicant into staff-assisted services. At another One-Stop Career Center, the final decision process is more informal and generally left to frontline staff.

Criteria for WIA Staff-Assisted Services

The task of delineating exactly which customers are suitable and eligible for WIA staff-assisted services is one that is largely left to local areas to decide, although federal and state-level influences carry substantial weight in these decisions. Generally speaking, there are three main, and often competing, priorities that local areas consider when defining suitability and eligibility criteria: 1) serving the customers with the highest need, 2) meeting WIA performance measures, and 3) making optimal use of available funds. This sub-section describes how each of these priorities has played out in the local areas being studied; it then explores the challenges that local areas have experienced in trying to reconcile the priorities' competing demands.

Serving the Customers With the Highest Need

One prominent philosophy at the local level for deciding which customers to serve more intensively is to target those who need assistance the most. Serving these customers, who are usually the hardest to serve, has long been a focus of publicly funded job training and employment programs. In fact, the hard-to-serve nature of many program participants is the chief reason that economist Joseph Stiglitz concludes that publicly funded job assistance represents a legitimate government function.³

In keeping with this principle, some LWIAs have explicitly targeted the hard-to-serve when defining their eligibility and suitability criteria for WIA staff-assisted services. For example, one local area has customers select from the following list any barriers that pertain to them:

- I have not attained a high school diploma or GED.
- My family’s income can be considered low based on the chart provided.
- I have limited English skills (speaking, reading or writing)
- I have not maintained full-time employment (32+ hour work week) for more than 13 consecutive weeks in the last three months.
- My current living situation is not stable or permanent.
- I have a disability (physical, mental, or learning disability)
- I have been arrested and/or convicted of a crime.
- I have received TANF/Cal Works (Welfare-cash aid) one or more months.
- I am 55 years old or older.

Once the customer identifies his or her barriers to finding employment, the local area uses that information to make a decision regarding the level of service to provide. To aid its decision, the WIB has created clear guidelines specifying that customers with greater than two but fewer than five barriers are to be considered suitable for WIA staff-assisted services.

Meeting WIA Performance Measures

Because only those customers who receive staff-assisted services are subject to WIA’s performance measures, performance—or, more precisely, the fear of poor performance—plays some role in determining which customers receive WIA staff-assisted services and, therefore, who remains a self-services customer. A promising “high performance” customer under the

³ J. Stiglitz, P. Orszag, and J. Orszag, *The Role of Government in a Digital Age* (Paper commissioned by the Computer and Communications Industry Association, 2000).

WIA performance measures must demonstrate the ability to get and keep a job (and, hence, show positive outcomes on the entered employment and retention rates) and record high earnings. Thus, staff in the One-Stop Career Centers tend to select for WIA staff-assisted services those individuals who are motivated, demonstrate reasonable financial stability as a basis for undertaking training (if training is being contemplated), and show barriers that are not viewed as intractable.

Optimizing the Use of Available Funds

The third prominent consideration determining access to WIA staff-assisted services is how the selection process fits into an LWIA's budget. Respondents at most sites mentioned that there was a scarcity of funds relative to the need for services, which limited their capacity to provide staff-assisted services to all who might benefit.

In this context, the pressure has intensified on local areas to ensure that their WIA allocation is invested wisely. In fact, some local respondents liken WIA training funds to scholarship programs that have lengthy application processes. These respondents feel it makes sense to sponsor candidates who show the motivation and commitment to stay in their training program and get and keep a job, because they are the customers who are most likely to benefit from the LWIA's investment. Furthermore, some of the One-Stop operators and staff who were interviewed were excited about being able to assemble a high-caliber pool of workers whom they could then market to their employer customers. From this perspective, including more highly skilled and experienced workers in its labor pool benefits the public workforce investment system's efforts to expand services to the business community.

As an example, one One-Stop Career Center ensures that those receiving WIA staff-assisted services are well motivated by stringing out the period of enrollment into staff-assisted services over a several-week period. To start the process, self-service customers who are interested in WIA staff-assisted services undertake a 45-minute intake interview with a WIA counselor. If the customer appears suitable for further WIA services, the customer's application is submitted to the LWIA's WIA administrator for approval. The approval process typically takes two to three weeks, during which time the customer is asked to return to meet with the case manager several more times to begin developing the Individual Employment Plan; those who consistently miss their appointments will have their WIA application cancelled. Staff acknowledge that one purpose of drawing out the process in this way is to ensure that customers show sufficient motivation to succeed before enrollment in WIA staff-assisted services takes place. Similarly, in another LWIA, customers must complete a five-day workshop that covers job search strategies, interviewing skills, and resume preparation. Willingness to attend the workshop and consistency of attendance become criteria for determining the customer's motivation level, and thus his or her suitability for staff-assisted services.

Reconciling Competing Priorities

One reason why many local respondents find the implementation of the self-service concept so challenging is that there is an inherent conflict between the need to make wise WIA investments and maximize the LWIA's performance measures on the one hand, and the desire and duty to serve those who are truly the most in need of services on the other hand. Reflecting these tensions, some have expressed concern that excessive "creaming" is taking place in WIA,⁴ while at the same time, the strong social work mentality that causes line staff to reach out to the very neediest customers for registration in workforce programs has also been highlighted.⁵

How the balance is struck between these competing priorities causes a tension that is palpable to local staff. Clearly, LWIA staff recognize the need to make good investment decisions, yet often the very same respondents express reservations about taking this "good investment" approach too far, as they are fearful that stricter screening processes allow hard-to-serve self-service customers to flounder for lack of more directed assistance.

The Integrated Service Delivery Model

New York State and several LWIAs in California have introduced a new service model that significantly reconceptualizes the screening process for WIA staff-assisted services. This new process classifies all or nearly all resource room users as recipients of WIA staff-assisted services.

In New York, this outcome is the consequence of two decisions made by the New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL). First, NYSDOL mandated in a 2006 directive that all of the state's LWIAs implement a "functional alignment plan," according to which WIA and ES programs should move beyond co-location and coordination to develop a shared customer pool, with a single customer flow. Under this plan, all ES customers become WIA customers, and vice versa. Second, the state issued a directive mandating that virtually all One-Stop Career Center customers must be provided with an initial assessment focused on determining whether the customer is job ready or needs career development services.⁶ Further, the state made clear

⁴ For example, see the U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Workforce Investment Act: Additional Actions Would Further Improve the Workforce System* (2007), and B. Barnow and C. King, *The Workforce Investment Act in Eight States* (2005).

⁵ Heckman, Smith, and Taber, cited in J. Heckman and J. Smith (2004) "The Determinants of Participation in a Social Program: Evidence from a Prototypical Job Training Program," *Journal of Labor Economics* (22).

⁶ This guidance was promulgated in the state's Workforce Development System Technical Advisory #08-4. To be precise, the only One-Stop Career Center customers not provided with an initial assessment are UI claimants who are work-search exempt. Respondents we spoke with estimate that such customers account for about two percent of all workforce system customers.

that, in accordance with its interpretation of TEGL 17-05, an initial assessment is deemed to be a staff-assisted service, which means that virtually all One-Stop Career Center customers are considered to have received a WIA staff-assisted service. Even though self-service still exists as a category of service, almost no customers in the state, practically speaking, are classified as receiving *only* self-services (that is, self-services in the absence of also receiving WIA staff-assisted services). Exhibit II-2 shows what this new policy has meant for the volume of WIA staff-assisted customers in this state in recent years.

**Exhibit II-2:
Number of Customers in New York State Receiving
WIA Staff-Assisted Services, by Program Year**

	<u>Number of Adult Exiters</u>
2003	33,357
2004	33,136
2005	31,990
2006	305,423
2007	382,593

Note: The numbers tabulated are drawn from the Workforce Investment Act Standardized Record Data (WIASRD) supplied by DOL and represent those who exited from the WIA adult program after having received a WIA staff-assisted service. Data for PY 2007 are preliminary.

Twelve LWIAs in California, including several that are in the study’s site-visit sample, have adopted similar policies as part of California’s pilot “integrated service delivery system.” As in New York, this initiative stemmed from an effort to streamline service delivery and better coordinate customer services, and specifically to systematically improve the coordination of WIA and ES services and achieve improved customer outcomes and more efficient and effective customer service. Components of the integrated service delivery model include the following:

- An integrated customer flow that sets clear parameters for a service delivery process with a sequence of demand-driven universal services that does not emphasize program eligibility.
- A commitment to and process for an integrated customer pool, so that all One-Stop Career Center customers are registered simultaneously in the performance measures calculations of both WIA and ES (and other programs, such as the Trade Adjustment Assistance program, if applicable).
- Integrated staffing that provides services to the integrated customer pool.

Furthermore, as in New York, developing a customer-focused workforce development system means that all center customers receive an initial skills assessment, which is construed as meeting the definition of “significant staff involvement” as described in TEG 17-05. One California LWIA participating in this pilot, Sacramento’s Employment and Training Agency, estimates that the number of customers receiving WIA staff-assisted services will jump from about 3,000 per year to more than 30,000 per year as a consequence of its adoption of this policy.

Conclusions

This chapter has made clear that provision of One-Stop self-services is fraught with considerable tension. Many resource room customers are found to have substantial difficulty navigating a center’s self-service tools and resources on their own because of limited computer literacy, basic skills deficiencies, or other reasons. Consequently, relatively few can be viewed as truly self-sufficient, able to conduct an efficient and successful job search entirely on their own or with only a brief orientation to One-Stop Career Center services. Because of this fact, resource room staff play a major helping role that, while limited in scope and intensity, seems absolutely critical and obscures what it means to be a self-service customer.

At the same time, resource constraints do place an upper limit on the amount of staff assistance that resource rooms can reasonably provide as part of the WIA self-services tier, and limit as well the number of customers who can move on to WIA staff-assisted services. A number of LWIAs, however, aim to transcend this constraint by mandating an integrated services delivery model that effectively requires all resource room customers to receive at least an initial assessment, which, in the LWIAs’ view, causes virtually all customers to be classified as having received WIA staff-assisted services.

III. RESULTS OF THE LOCAL-AREA SURVEY

One component of the evaluation’s data collection was a survey of the nation’s local workforce investment areas designed to provide snapshots, in two points in time, of self-service tools and resources that LWIAs make available. The survey also served to identify LWIAs that track self-service usage. Findings from this two-part survey were detailed in two separate reports previously submitted as part of the evaluation. In this chapter, we summarize these findings, thus providing a broad look at self-services nationwide and establishing the context for the results to follow.

Survey Administration and Content

The research team assembled a mailing list of chief contacts at each LWIA from various sources, including directories maintained by the National Association of Counties and the National Association of Workforce Boards. These contacts were typically local workforce investment board executive directors or WIA administrators. The mailing list covered all of the nation’s local workforce areas, excluding those in Puerto Rico and other territories—a total of 580.¹ Instructions included with the survey directed the recipient to either complete the survey or forward it to another person in the local area, such as the One-Stop Career Center operator, who might be better able to respond to the survey’s questions. Respondents were also offered the option of completing the survey electronically, through the Internet.

In keeping with the project’s design, the survey was administered two times, approximately 2.5 years apart. The initial administration (also referred to as “round one,” or “the 2003 survey”) commenced in early March 2003 and concluded in June 2003, and the second administration (also referred to as “round two,” or “the 2006 survey”) commenced in early October 2005 and

¹ A major objective of the survey was to identify local areas that track self-service usage, so that site visits could be conducted to some of them. Because local areas in outlying territories were deemed inappropriate for site visiting, they were excluded from the sampling frame, leaving about 580 local areas. The precise number differed for the round-one and round-two surveys, because the composition of the nation’s LWIAs changed slightly in the intervening years (e.g., some LWIAs consolidated). Additionally, some LWIAs in Louisiana were heavily impacted by Hurricane Katrina just before the round-two survey was launched, and these were removed from the sampling frame for the second survey administration.

concluded in early 2006. Each administration of the survey followed a common sequence—a hard-copy version of the survey was mailed to the targeted respondents, along with a cover letter explaining the purposes of the effort and asking for cooperation. Several weeks later, a reminder postcard was sent to nonrespondents, followed by a second mailing of the survey several weeks later. Thereafter, e-mail reminders, followed up with telephone calls, were sent to prompt respondents to return a completed survey if they had not already done so. Respondents had at least three months to complete and return each survey.

Completed surveys from 400 local areas were received in round one, for a response rate of just under 70 percent, and from 431 local areas in round two, for a response rate of 76 percent. The tabulations presented in the remainder of this chapter are based on these returns. An analysis of nonresponse shows that the local areas that provided data reflect the diversity of local areas across the nation as a whole.

The survey itself covered five major topic areas:

- *Number of physical access points*, including comprehensive and satellite centers.
- *Customer flow*, including whether customers need to spend a required amount of time using self-services before advancing to staff-assisted services.
- *Local-area tracking systems*, including whether local areas track information about customers who use self-services and their satisfaction with services.
- *Self-services available* to job-seeking customers and employers, and in what format the services are available.
- *Overall satisfaction* with self-services, challenges in developing self-service tools, and plans for improvement.

Findings pertaining to each of these major topic areas are presented in the sections below. For the most part, the focus of this chapter is on results from the round-two survey, since these are the most recent. However, in some cases results from both rounds are presented so that changes over time can be seen.

Physical Access Points

The WIA legislation and conforming regulations stipulate that each local area shall have “at least one comprehensive physical center ... that must provide the core services specified in WIA,” but notes that such centers may be supplemented by satellite or affiliated sites (20 CFR §662.100). Exhibit III-1 provides information on what configurations of centers local areas were using, as of the round-two survey.

As the table shows, all local areas but one had at least one comprehensive center, in keeping with the legislation. The predominant situation was to have only one comprehensive center (40

percent of local areas) or a few of them (another 51 percent). Only about 8 percent had six or more comprehensive centers.

Looking at areas’ networks of access points—comprehensive and satellite centers combined—the picture of physical access expands. Only about 10 percent of local areas have just one physical access point, whereas more than 30 percent have six or more access points. Indeed, some local areas have very extensive networks encompassing 30 or more access points.

**Exhibit III-1:
Percentage of LWIAs with Various Numbers of One-Stop Centers**

	<u>Comprehensive Centers</u>	<u>Satellites</u>	<u>Total</u>
None	0.2%	28.2%	0.0%
One center only	40.2	19.9	9.8
2 to 5 centers	51.4	38.0	57.3
6 to 10 centers	5.7	10.5	24.6
11 centers or more	2.4	3.4	8.4

Note: Data are drawn from the round-two survey.

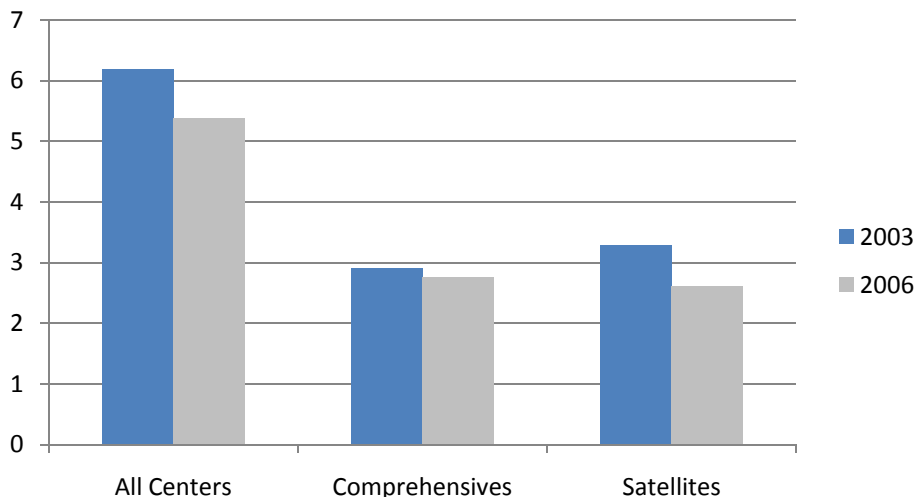
A primary determinant of the number of physical access points is the geographic scope of the service area. In general, local areas with geographically larger service areas have more access points. For example, the Alabama Workforce Investment Area can boast of 37 access points (23 comprehensive centers and 14 satellites, according to the round-two survey), a number that seems appropriate given that this LWIA serves most of the State of Alabama. Similarly, population size seems to be important, with more heavily populated areas having more access points.

However, factors other than geographic scope and population size clearly come into play. For example, the population per access point ranges from a low of about 50,000 in some LWIAs (relatively many access points per person) to a high of more than 200,000 persons in others (relatively few access points per person). A regression analysis (not shown here) reveals that population size and land area together explain only about one-third of the total variation in the number of access points. Clearly, some local areas make a concerted effort to disburse access points widely and find this strategy is financially tenable, while others emphasize a more concentrated service delivery structure.

There is also some evidence of a mild retrenchment in the number of access points over time, particularly in the number of satellite centers. As shown in Exhibit III-2, the average number of access points per LWIA dropped from 6.2 in round one to 5.4 in round two, a change brought on almost entirely by a fall-off in the number of satellite centers (from an average of 3.3 to an

average of 2.6).² Thus, while the number of comprehensive centers is holding steady, LWIAs may be finding it difficult, or at least not cost-effective, to maintain extensive networks of satellites.³

Exhibit III-2: Average Number of Centers per LWIA, 2003 and 2006



Customer Flow

The legislation and implementing regulations specify a hierarchy of services that, to some degree, dictates the flow of customers through the One-Stop delivery system. In keeping with

² Examining change over time is complicated by the fact that different LWIAs answered the survey in each year. Thus, changes over time calculated by comparing round-one and round-two univariate distributions could represent either true change over time or artifacts of the compositional differences in the sample (i.e., that data from different LWIAs are being tabulated in each year). However, the conclusions are virtually identical when this tabulation is restricted to LWIAs that answered both rounds of the survey. Thus, compositional differences in the sample can be ruled out as an explanation. The role of compositional differences was examined throughout this paper whenever change over time is being reported, and can confidently be ruled out as an explanation.

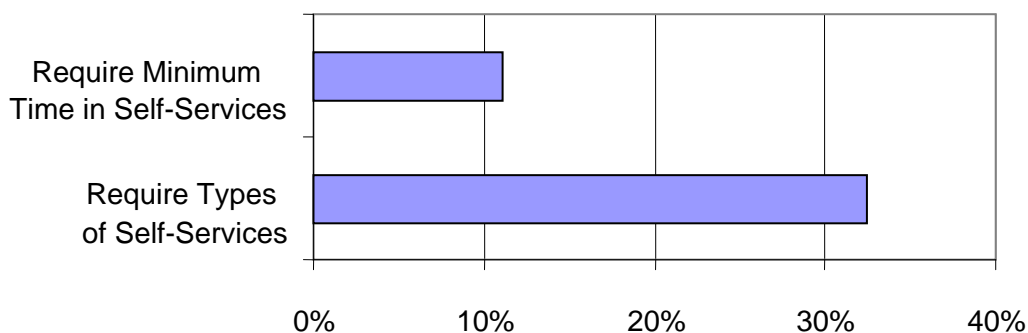
³ Results from other sources are somewhat at odds with this conclusion. For example, in a 2007 report, GAO concluded that, over the four years prior to 2007, the number of comprehensive One-Stop Career Centers declined somewhat, while the number of satellites increased slightly. (See U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2007, *Workforce Investment Act: One-Stop System Infrastructure Continues to Evolve, but Labor Should Take Action to Require That All Employment Service Offices Are Part of the System*, GAO-07-1096). GAO's findings may be at odds with the ones reported here possibly due to differences in what is classified as a comprehensive versus satellite center. Elsewhere, in its own review based on a 2007 survey, DOL finds that the average LWIA reported having 2.8 comprehensive centers and 3.1 satellites or affiliates; the former figure matches exactly what is reported here, while the latter figure is somewhat higher. (See D. Ryan, 2009, *Size, Structure and Services of Local Workforce Investment Areas*, Draft Report).

this hierarchy, customers are expected to receive at least one core service before receiving intensive services, and at least one intensive service before receiving training. Thus, core services—which are comprised mainly of self-services—constitute the entry point into the One-Stop Career Center system.

However, WIA allows for substantial state and local flexibility as to how these basic provisions are implemented. As a result, local areas display a range of policies regarding the amount and type of services that customers must use at one service level before advancing to the next. Previous research shows that most local areas are very customer-focused and thus allow customers to move through service tiers as rapidly as the customers' specific circumstances warrant. However, others establish set durations during which customers must remain in one service tier before advancing to the next.⁴

Exhibit III-3 demonstrates that, at least with respect to how readily customers move from self-services to staff-assisted services, similar flexibility prevails. Only about 11 percent of local areas require customers to spend a specific minimum amount of time using self-services before they are eligible for staff-assisted services; of those that do, the required durations range from a few hours (about 62 percent) to as long as a few weeks (8 percent).

Exhibit III-3: Requirements in Self-Services before Customers Can Move to Staff-Assisted Services
(percent of LWIAs with the requirement)



⁴ Social Policy Research Associates, with contributions from TATC Consulting, *The Workforce Investment Act After Five Years: Results from the National Evaluation of the Implementation of WIA* (2004).

As the exhibit also shows, requiring that customers use specific types of self-services or informational services before being eligible for staff-assisted services is somewhat more common, with about 32 percent imposing this requirement. Among the LWIAs of this type, the most commonly required services were conducting a job search, registering with the state's job bank, or attending an orientation session.

Tracking Self-Service Usage

TEGL 17-05 defines a participant of the workforce system as someone who “is determined eligible to participate in the program and receives a service funded by the program in either a physical location (One-Stop Career Center or affiliate site) or remotely through electronic technologies.” In keeping with this definition, ETA Form 9091, the Workforce Investment Act Annual Report, elicits information on the number of customers who use self-services without moving on to staff-assisted services. Similar reporting expectations are established for Wagner-Peyser programs, as is made clear in the instructions for the ETA 9002 Report.

Despite this expectation, the results from the survey (see Exhibit III-4) show that many local areas have not implemented comprehensive tracking systems that include data on users of self-services. Although requiring customers to provide their names is relatively common, only about one-third of LWIAs require all or most self-service customers to provide their SSNs or identify what services they intend to use. Less common still are requirements that customers provide their demographics (e.g., race, gender, etc.), reasons for using services, or work history; these data are requested by between 15 percent and 25 percent of LWIAs.

Available Self-Services

The survey asked local areas about the tools and informational resources they make available to individual self-service customers and to employer customers, whether on-site or on the Internet. The results derived from these questions are described in three parts below.

Local-Area Websites and their Features

Electronic resources are clearly meant to be a key element of self-services in today's One-Stop delivery system. As is discussed in a subsequent chapter, the state website is typically the focal point of these efforts, with its job matching system and access to labor market information and other tools and resources. Yet local areas often have their own websites that customers—both individuals and employers—can access. As shown in Exhibit III-5, 78 percent of local areas have such a web presence.

Exhibit III-4: Percentage of LWIAs Tracking Information for On-Site Self-Services Customers

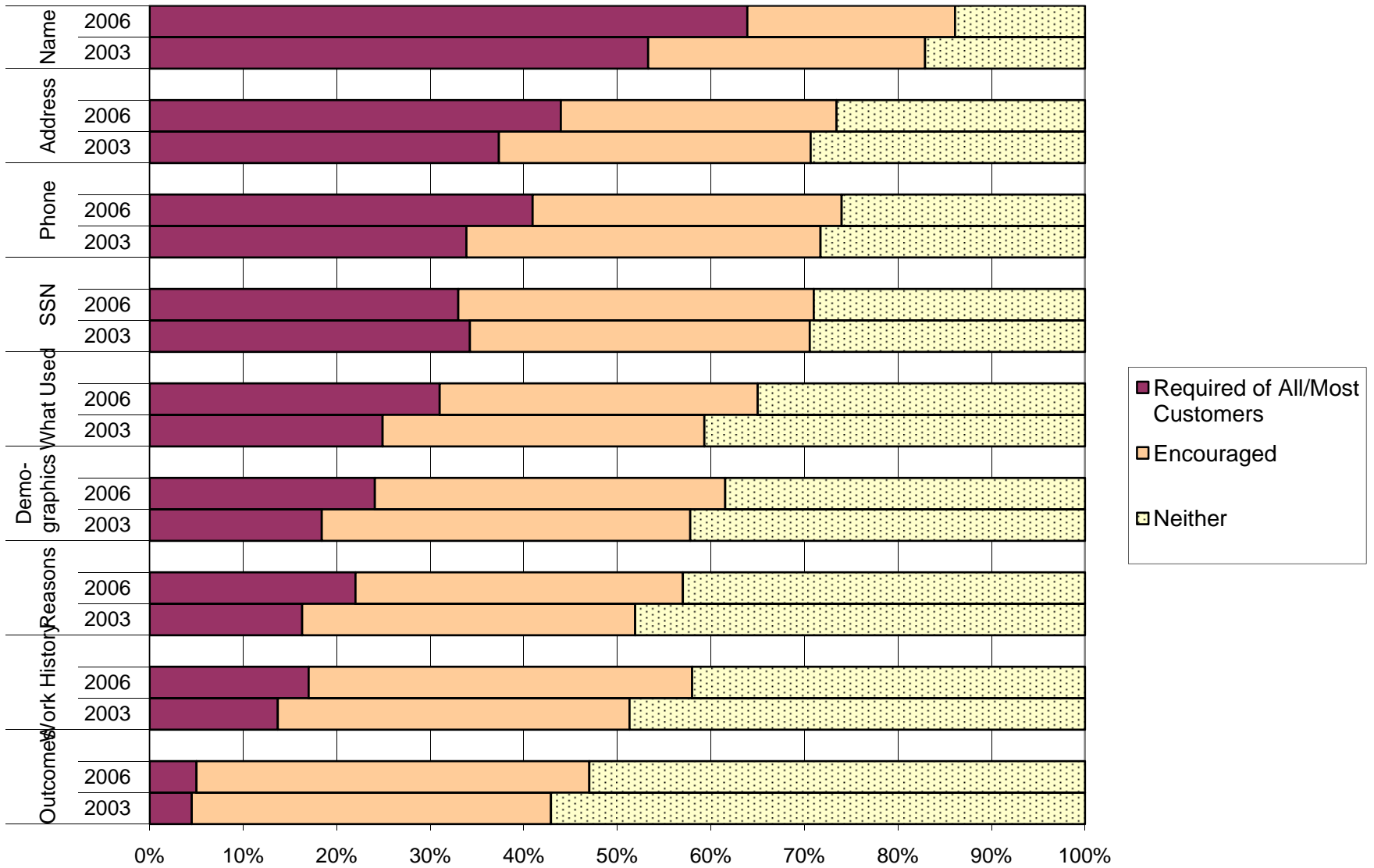
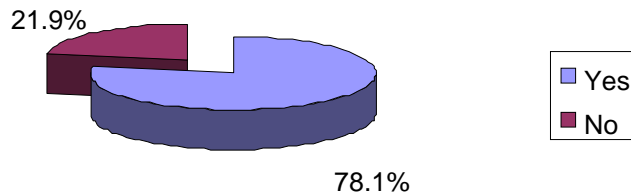
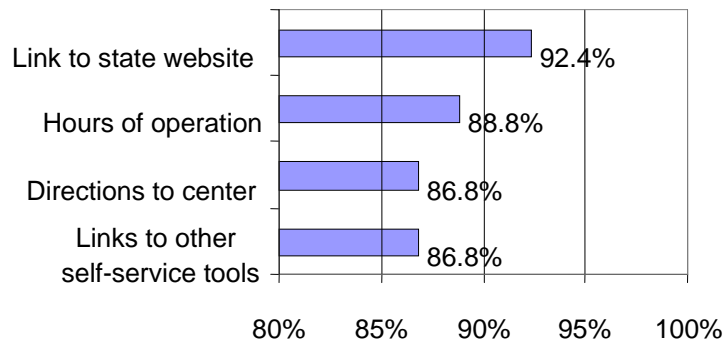


Exhibit III-5: Percentage of LWIAs with a Local Website



As Exhibit III-6 reveals, nearly all of these local-area websites have the same basic components, including links to the state website and to other self-service resources, and information about the hours of operation and location of the One-Stop Career Center.

Exhibit III-6: Percentage of LWIAs Whose Own Website Has Various Features



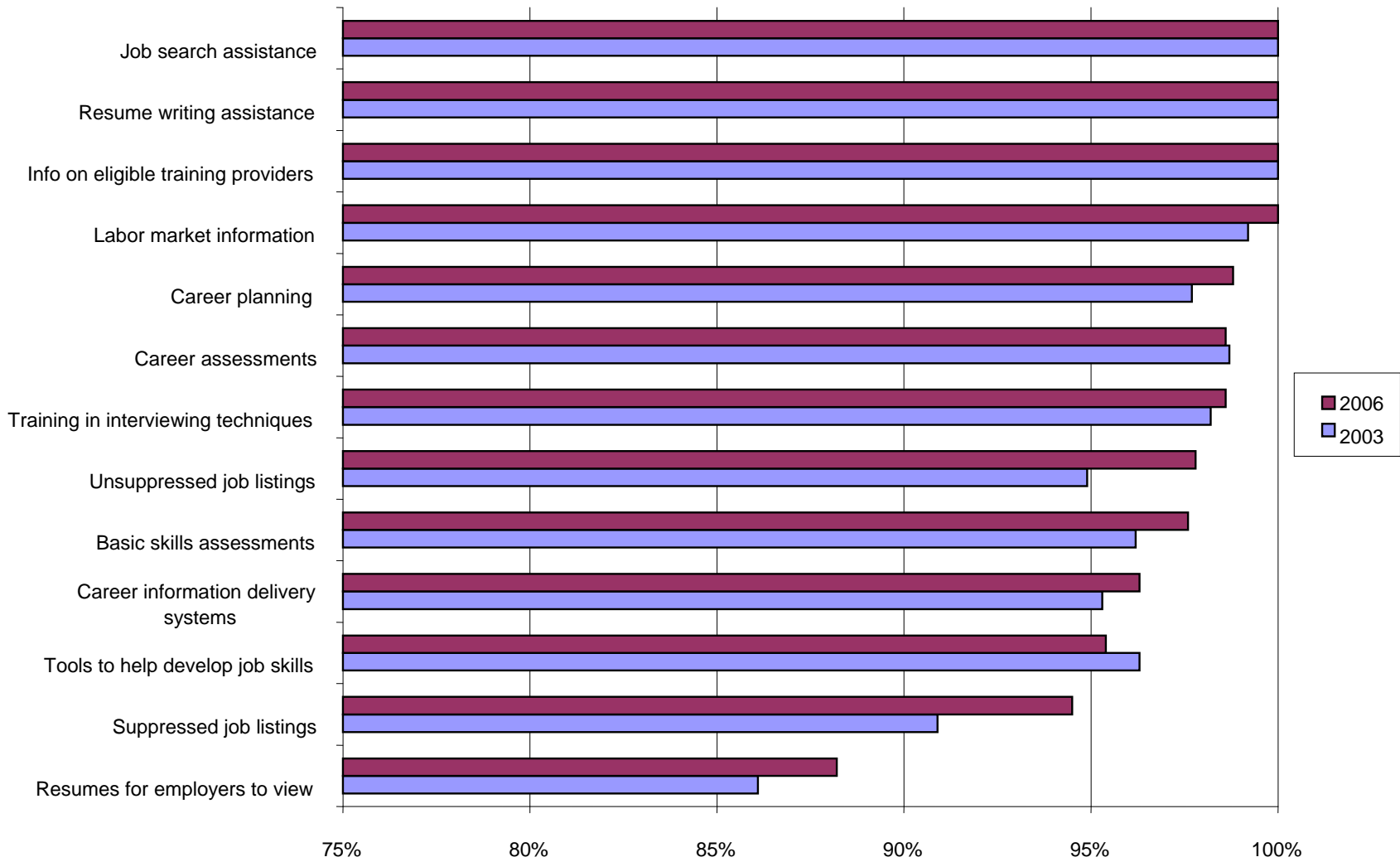
Services for Individuals

The WIA legislation and implementing regulations authorize a variety of services designed to improve customers’ access to job and career information and enhance their job-seeking skills. These resources can be made available on either a self-service or staff-assisted basis, and those that are made available as self-services can be delivered in a variety of formats. This section describes the extent to which local areas are embracing these possibilities.

Services Offered for the Job Seeker

As illustrated in Exhibit III-7, a wide array of career planning and job search services is available in virtually all local areas. For example, all or nearly all of the local areas provide job search

Exhibit III-7: Percentage of LWIAs Offering Various Services



assistance, resume-writing assistance, information on eligible training providers, labor market information, career planning tools and career assessments, training in interviewing techniques, and access to job listings, among other things. Even the least frequently offered service—resumes posted for employers to view—is still offered by an appreciable majority of LWIAs. Moreover, a comparison of results from the round-one (2003) and round-two (2006) surveys shows access has increased somewhat over time for virtually all services.

The survey also asked local areas if the services they provided were delivered on a self-service basis or with staff assistance. As is evident from Exhibit III-8, most local areas offer many of these services in both ways. For example, 80 percent or more of local areas offer job search assistance, resume writing assistance, information on training providers, labor market information, and access to unsuppressed job listings both as a self-service and as a staff-assisted service. In fact, very few local areas provide any of the services listed in this table in *only* a self-service format; in other words, if the service is provided on a self-service basis, it will typically be offered with staff assistance as well.

**Exhibit III-8:
Percentage of LWIAs Offering Services on a Self-Service or Staff-Assisted Basis**

	Both Self-Service & Staff-Assisted	Self-Service Only	Staff-Assisted Only
Job search assistance	93.3%	1.7%	5.1
Resume writing assistance	88.8	1.7	9.6
Info on eligible training providers	84.5	5.2	10.2
Labor market information	90.0	5.5	4.5
Career planning	58.4	2.7	37.6
Career assessments	60.5	3.9	34.2
Training in interviewing techniques	57.2	3.8	37.6
Unsuppressed job listings	82.8	8.0	7.0
Basic skills assessments	43.6	3.6	50.4
Career information delivery systems	76.9	5.3	14.1
Tools to help develop job skills	69.8	4.4	21.2
Suppressed job listings	50.3	4.6	39.6
Resumes for employers to view	73.5	8.6	6.1

Note: Percentages summed across a row equal the percentage of LWIAs that offer the service, shown in the preceding exhibit. Services are listed in the order in which they appear in that exhibit (i.e., in decreasing order by the percentage of LWIAs offering the service)

However, the reverse is not always true—many local areas offer some of these services only on a staff-assisted basis (i.e., not also as a self-service). For example, although 44 percent of local areas offer basic skills assessment in both self-service and staff-assisted formats, a greater percentage (50 percent) offer this service only on a staff-assisted basis, presumably because they feel that self-assessment of basic skills is difficult or unreliable. Other services also provided only on a staff-assisted basis by an appreciable number of local areas are access to suppressed job listings (40 percent of local areas), career planning (38 percent), training in interviewing techniques (38 percent), and career assessments (34 percent). As Chapter II noted, however, different LWIAs may offer the same service in identical ways but classify it differently, with some classifying it as a self-service and others as a staff-assisted service; thus, the differences across LWIAs implied by the data in Exhibit III-8 may represent as much classification differences as substantive differences in what is provided or how.

How Self-Services Are Delivered

For each service provided on a self-service basis, the survey asked about the format of delivery. Did the local area deliver the self-service using hard-copy materials, electronically via on-site computers only, over the Internet, or as part of a workshop classified as a self-service? The results from these queries, tabulated in Exhibit III-9, show that self-services are typically delivered in multiple ways. For example, 63 percent of local areas offer self-service resume-writing assistance via print materials, 58 percent offer it via on-site computers, 61 percent offer it through the Internet, and 69 percent offer it through a workshop. The offering of a broad range of resources in diverse formats is striking and suggests that local areas are making self-services accessible to clients with a variety of preferred learning styles.

Of additional note in this exhibit is the wide variety of self-services that are delivered over the Internet and are thus accessible from remote locations (as opposed to only on-site). In fact, over-the-Internet is the most prevalent self-service delivery mode for almost every one of these services, and in many cases it outpaces other delivery modes by a considerable margin (though, as noted, many of these tools and resources are also available as a staff-assisted service).

Exhibit III-10 also shows that the use of the Internet as a delivery mode increased for most of these services from 2003 to 2006. The percentage of LWIAs offering Internet access to career planning resources, for example, increased from 60 percent in round one to more than 70 percent in round two.

**Exhibit III-9:
Percentage of LWIAs Offering Self-Services in Various Formats
(among those providing the service as a self-service)**

	Hard-Copy	Electronic (only on site)	Internet Accessible	Workshops (as a self- service)
Job search assistance	59.5%	41.2%	75.4%	60.1%
Resume writing assistance	62.7	57.6	61.3	68.9
Info on eligible training providers	57.7	38.9	89.2	20.9
Labor market information	72.3	41.8	93.6	34.4
Career planning	64.5	47.4	71.0	52.8
Career assessments	59.8	56.6	64.3	46.1
Training in interviewing techniques	58.9	38.0	48.1	77.4
Unsuppressed job listings	66.6	46.3	86.4	14.6
Basic skills assessments	54.8	54.7	45.7	43.2
Career information delivery systems	46.8	44.9	70.2	34.9
Tools to help develop job skills	60.3	47.7	64.6	56.9
Suppressed job listings	53.4	46.5	76.8	10.7
Resumes for employers to view	29.0	37.3	85.4	12.2

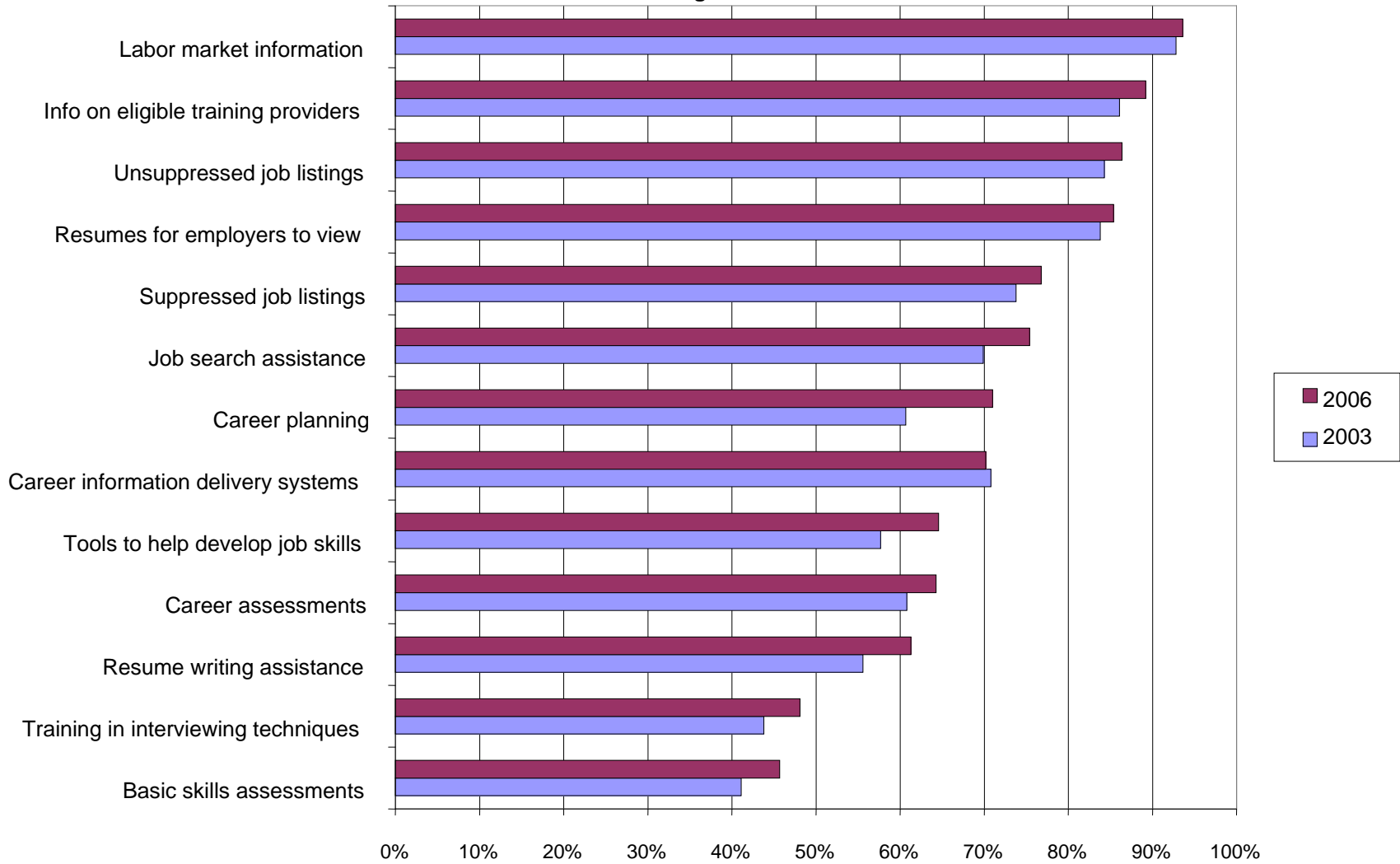
Note: Sums of percentages across the rows exceed 100 percent, because LWIAs offer these services in multiple formats.

Similarly, Internet access to most other self-service tools increased as well, though typically by a smaller margin. Meanwhile, the use of most other delivery modes has barely changed at all.⁵ Reflecting a broader societal transformation,⁶ local areas have clearly embraced the Internet as a way to provide wide access to self-services, both on-site and remotely.

⁵ Only the change over time in the use of Internet delivery is shown in this exhibit. However, results not shown in this chapter suggest that there has been almost no change in the percentages of LWIAs using hard-copy materials or workshops as a delivery mode for self-services, while on-site electronic modes have declined very slightly.

⁶ Social Policy Research Associates, *Technology-Based Learning Strategies* (Report prepared for the U.S. Department of Labor, 2006).

Exhibit III-10: Change over Time in Percentage of LWIAs Making Tools Available through the Internet



DOL had a particular interest in learning more about the sources of data used by local areas for providing labor market information. Thus, the survey asked respondents to provide an open-ended answer to the question “What are the key sources of Labor Market Information provided?” Of the 237 responses that were provided, a great majority (about 67 percent) specified the state labor market information website, either alone or in combination with something else. Federal sources of information, such as O*NET, America’s Career InfoNet, or the Bureau of Labor Statistics, were also sometimes mentioned, as was proprietary software such as *Choices*. Finally, a small number of local areas mentioned that they relied on data developed locally by such organizations as the local workforce investment board or chamber of commerce.

The survey also used an open-ended question format to determine which career information delivery systems were being used. *Choices* was cited most often, but frequently mentioned as well were *Eureka*, *CareerScope*, *Discover*, *Career Information Systems*, and a variety of state and federal resources, such as Texas’s OSCAR, North Carolina’s Careers, and, as a federal resource, O*NET.

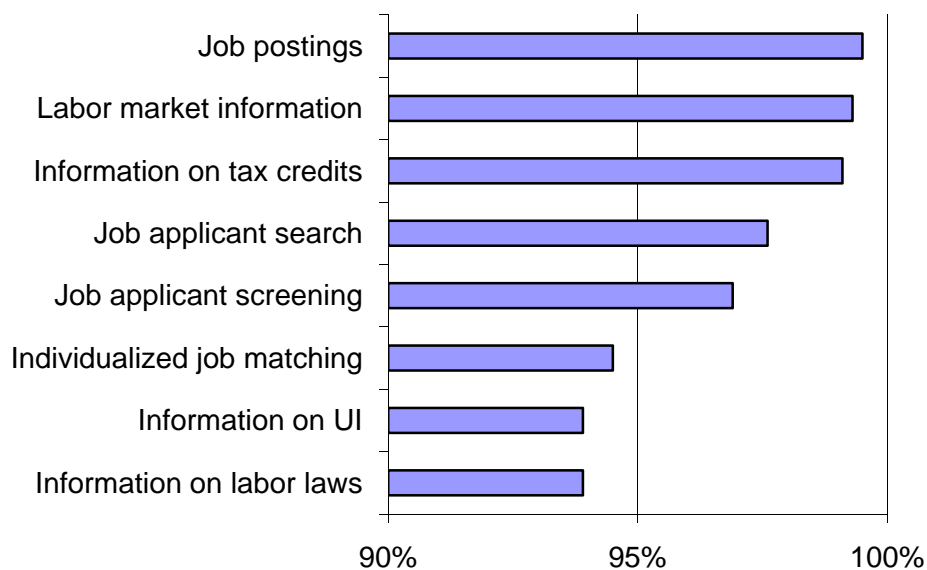
Areas Identified for Improvement

Overall, the results presented in this section suggest that One-Stop Career Centers across the nation are clearly demonstrating their commitment to making a broad array of resources and tools available to the job-seeking customer, and are doing so in a wide variety of electronic and other formats to ensure easy accessibility. Yet many would like to do still more. When we asked them in an open-ended question what additional self-services they would like to add for individuals, nearly 100 LWIAs offered responses. About one-half of those who provided a response mentioned a specific tool or resource that they felt their center was lacking. Among the many diverse things suggested in this category were online orientations, better assessment tools, tutorials on the use of computers, self-help basic skills software, information on starting a business, and data on the performance of eligible training providers. Another much smaller group mentioned specifically the need to expand their technological capabilities, such as by establishing a better tracking system for self-service usage, implementing touch-screen access to services, acquiring better electronic interfaces, or developing more powerful job-matching systems. A third group of respondents expressed the need for more resources for expansion of their overall capabilities, which included adding more staff, adding new centers, extending hours of operation, or, as one frustrated respondent put it, having “more of everything.” Finally, one individual expressed the sentiment that the basic-skill and computer-skill levels of the self-service customer were generally so poor that the LWIA did not think it useful to focus on expanding self-service resources at all (a theme discussed elsewhere in this report).

Services for Employers

The workforce system has increasingly come to recognize employers as making up an important class of customer. As a consequence, it has endeavored to develop more and better services and tools for them. This point is demonstrated by Exhibit III-11, which shows the percentage of LWIAs offering various services to employers, as of the time of the round-two survey. As the chart makes clear, services to employers in the activity realms asked about are indeed widespread, with nearly 100 percent of LWIAs offering the opportunity for employers to post jobs and access information on the labor market or tax credits. The percentages of local areas offering other types of services are only slightly smaller. Like services for job seekers, then, services for employers are diverse and widely available.

Exhibit III-11: Percentage of LWIAs Offering Various Services to Employers



As has been noted in other contexts,⁷ however, many employers prefer a personalized approach to the services they receive, which usually implies that some level of staff assistance will be made available. Thus, as Exhibit III-12 shows, nearly all local areas offer these services with some measure of staff assistance, either only in this format or with a self-service option. Thus,

⁷ See, for example, Social Policy Research Associates, *Business as Partner and Customer under WIA: A Study of Innovative Practices* (Report prepared for the U.S. Department of Labor, 2004).

as is the case with services for individual customers, only a small percentage of local areas deliver employer services solely in a self-services format.

The survey asked LWIAs if they would like to provide additional services to employers, and about 30 percent said yes. Many took this opportunity to express the desire to provide better employer services in general, such as better electronic interfaces or increased job matching capabilities; others mentioned the desire to add a specific service or resource, such as job fairs, an on-site interviewing room, or workshops on specialized topics.

**Exhibit III-12:
Percentage of LWIAs Offering Services on a Self-Service or Staff-Assisted Basis**

	Both Self-Service & Staff-Assisted	Self-Service Only	Staff-Assisted Only
Job postings	89.1%	1.4%	9.0%
Labor market information	87.4%	3.8%	8.1%
Information on tax credits	75.7%	1.7%	21.7%
Job applicant search	70.8%	1.4%	25.4%
Job applicant screening	55.3%	1.0%	40.7%
Individualized job matching	50.4%	2.2%	41.9%
Information on UI	66.9%	7.9%	19.1%
Information on labor laws	70.8%	8.1%	15.0%

Note: Percentages summed across a row equal the percentage of LWIAs that offer the service, shown in the preceding exhibit. Services are listed in the order in which they appear in that exhibit (i.e., in decreasing order by the percentage of LWIAs offering the service).

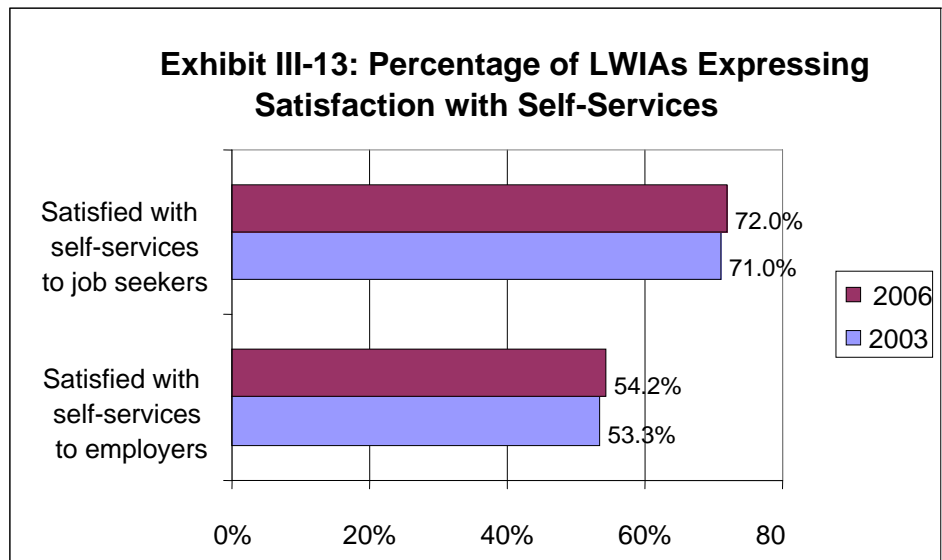
Strengths, Challenges, and Satisfaction with Services

In addition to eliciting information on specific aspects of the implementation, design, and delivery of self-services, the survey asked several self-evaluative questions. It gave respondents the opportunity to rate their satisfaction with the self-services provided by their centers, to identify the major strengths of their self-service systems, and to describe the challenges they encountered in implementation.

Touching on the first of these topics, Exhibit III-13 shows that LWIAs are overall quite satisfied with the self-services they provide to job seeking customers, with more than 70 percent expressing satisfaction. In contrast, they are much less satisfied with the self-services they

provide to employers, with only a bare majority of LWIAs expressing satisfaction. The degree of satisfaction in both categories was only slightly more favorable in 2006 than in 2003.

Those expressing disappointment with their self-services for job seekers mentioned several areas for improvement. A group of about one-third of those LWIAs expressing dissatisfaction mentioned the need for general infrastructural improvements, such as better or upgraded hardware and software, a tracking system for capturing self-service usage, or more space for the resource room. Those in another slightly smaller group mentioned some specific service that they would like to add or improve, such as being able to offer more workshops or



more frequent orientations, improving tools available for customers to conduct self assessments, or having better resources for educational development. Another 30 percent of respondents mentioned that they would like to improve their staffing to help resource room customers, generally by having more staff available to assist customers but, in a few cases, by improving staff training or capability, such as by adding bilingual staff. Finally, a handful expressed the general desire to continually improve; as one respondent put it, “there is always room to improve.”

Suggested ways of improving self-services for employers were generally less specific. The largest category of respondents—about one-half of the total—expressed the general sentiment that the center needed to do more. Among those in this group, general responses such as “we need more space,” “we need to do more,” and “we need a dedicated Business Resource Room” predominated. Another group of about one-quarter of respondents mentioned the need to conduct better outreach to employers, to increase awareness and usage among business

customers, or simplify access. Others volunteered that the concept of self-services was not particularly applicable to businesses, because they generally wanted and needed personalized attention. Likely for this reason, some respondents specifically mentioned that their greatest need was for additional staff to work with business customers.

Despite these perceived needs for improvement, respondents were generally proud of their self-service systems, as the satisfaction ratings described above attest. When they were asked, respondents also had no difficulty identifying the strengths of their self-services, with many mentioning multiple attributes.

The most commonly cited strength, mentioned by nearly half of all respondents, was the quality or availability of staff—specifically the ability to assist customers when needed. Typical responses among this group drew attention to the professionalism and helpfulness of their staff when assisting self-service customers who were struggling; it was also frequently mentioned that staff contributed by partners had very valuable expertise to lend. Some took this occasion to remark how critical it was to have staff available to assist self-service customers who often had difficulty using resource room computers or other resources on their own.

Another one quarter of respondents identified as their primary strength the overall accessibility and appeal of their self-service resources. Within this group, some mentioned that the physical layout of their resource rooms presented an inviting and professional atmosphere with ample space to meet peak customer flows. Others within this group mentioned that their network of comprehensive centers and satellites ensured that services were physically accessible to customers in far-flung service areas, or that adaptive technology ensured accessibility for customers with disabilities. Still others in this group pointed out that many of their services were accessible around the clock via the Internet.

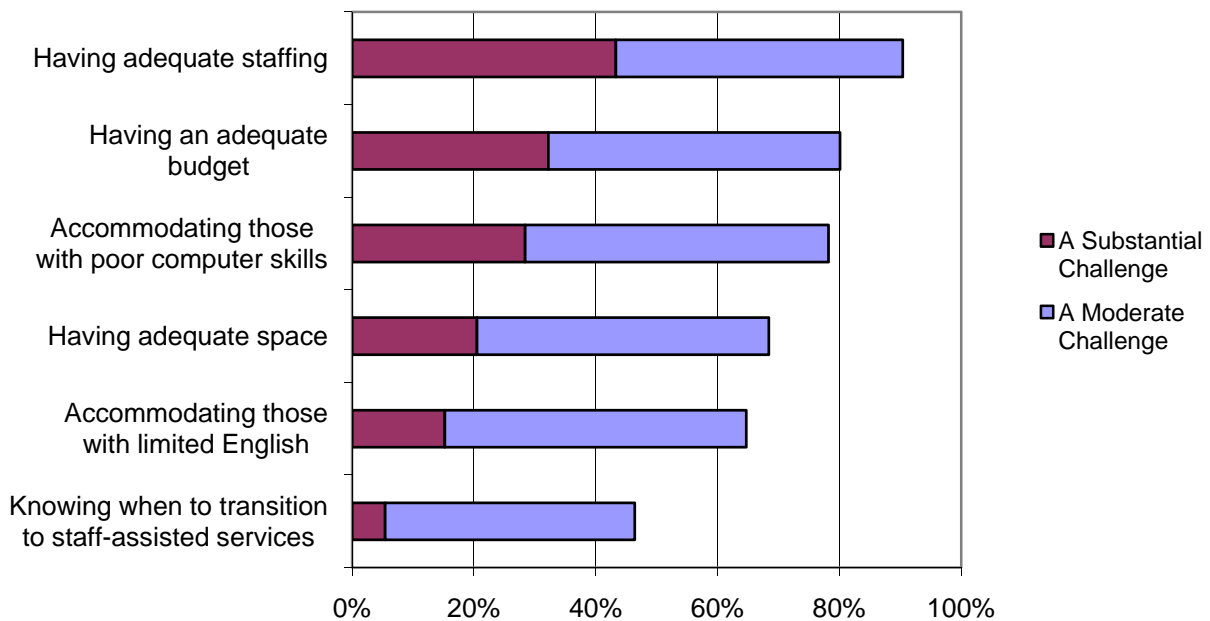
Another group of about a quarter drew attention to their state-of-the art equipment. Very often these respondents boasted that their computer equipment had recently been upgraded or that their software was customer friendly and easy to use.

Still another one quarter of respondents mentioned some specific service or services of which they were especially proud, including things like peer support groups for job seekers, an elegant job matching system, workshops on a variety of topics, and software to boost computer literacy. Also classified in this category were LWIAs that noted, simply, that they had a wide variety of high quality tools and resources available.

Finally, about 12 percent of respondents mentioned that their self-service systems improved the efficiency of their delivery of services generally, in that some customers could work independently, freeing staff to focus on those who needed personalized, staff-assisted services.⁸

While recognizing and celebrating their strengths, respondents were also forthcoming when asked to describe the challenges they encountered in developing their self-service systems. These results are tabulated in Exhibit III-14. While LWIAs are proud of the staff assistance they can provide, as the above discussion attests, the exhibit shows that having adequate staffing was also identified as the single most important challenge. In fact, about 90 percent of LWIAs mentioned this as at least something of a challenge, and more than 40 percent mentioned it as a substantial challenge. Clearly, providing adequate staff assistance constitutes one of the greatest difficulties currently facing the self-services system.

Exhibit III-14: Percentage of LWIAs Identifying Various Challenges to Self-Services Implementation



Another possibly related challenge was having an adequate budget to support self-services; this was mentioned as a problem by about 80 percent of respondents, and as a substantial problem by about one-third. Just short of these levels in severity is the challenge of accommodating customers with poor computer skills, followed by having adequate space for resource rooms and

⁸ The sum of percentages exceeds 100 percent because about one-third of respondents mentioned multiple strengths that straddled categories.

accommodating customers with limited English proficiency. Finally, mentioned as somewhat of a concern by about 40 percent of respondents is the challenge of knowing when to transition a customer from self-services to staff-assisted services.

Conclusions

The enactment of WIA in 1998 placed new demands on the public workforce investment system by creating the expectation that all local workforce areas provide an array of high-quality core services to the universal customer. Results from the two rounds of the Local-Area Survey show that local areas have risen to the challenge.

To begin with, the infrastructure that has thus far been developed to provide customers with access to self-services is impressive. Virtually all local areas have at least one comprehensive One-Stop center, as WIA requires, and one-third of areas have six or more physical access points (i.e., comprehensive centers and satellites combined). Furthermore, most local areas make available a broad range of self-service informational tools and resources to both job-seeking and employer customers. For example, 80 percent or more of local areas provide job search assistance, resume-writing assistance, information on training providers, labor market information, and job listings on a self-service basis. Those that do offer these things typically provide access in a variety of formats, such as hard-copy listings, electronically, and through workshops not requiring WIA registration. Furthermore, access to these services via the Internet has been growing, and this is now the most common way in which self-services are made available, suggesting that customers can access these services not only on-site but also remotely. Self-services for employers are similar diverse, with opportunities for employers to post job openings, conduct job matching, and research the local labor market and labor laws.

In light of these offerings, most local areas express satisfaction with their self-service systems, especially those for job-seeking customers, and are quite proud of their accomplishments. They boast in particular of the quality and availability of resource room staff, who assist customers as needed. They laud their staff members' professionalism and helpfulness, and appreciate the special expertise that partner staff provide. Similarly, they are proud of the accessibility of their services, and drew attention to the extensive network of comprehensive One-Stop Career Centers and satellites, which offer widespread access to high-quality resources in an appealing and professional atmosphere.

Nonetheless, important challenges remain. To begin with, local areas note that many customers have difficulty making use of self-services, mostly because of their limited computer proficiency or weak literacy skills. For this reason, having the level of resource-room staffing needed to assist customers adequately was widely cited as an important remaining challenge. Also cited as important challenges were having an adequate budget to support the self-service system and

serving customers with weak computer-literacy skills. Further, some core services, such as basic and occupational skills assessments, seem not to lend themselves to self-service delivery. For these reasons, staff-assisted services clearly must retain an important role.

Additionally, although the majority of local areas require self-service customers to provide at least basic information about themselves, the systems used to track self-service usage are still far from adequate. Without mechanisms to track who uses self-services, for what purposes, and to what effect, local areas' efforts to fine-tune self-services to better meet customers' needs will remain limited.

These challenges notwithstanding, self-services have clearly become a fundamental part of the public workforce system, and its potential for facilitating access to useful resources and information tools for large numbers of customers is substantial.

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IV. FACILITATING ACCESS TO SELF-SERVICES

Universal access, a major principle of WIA, means that any individual who seeks to advance his or her career should be able to access information on job vacancies, career options, student financial aid, and relevant employment trends, and receive instruction on how to conduct a job search, write a résumé, or interview with an employer.¹ To promote universal access, One-Stop Career Centers have adopted the following three strategies:

1. Promoting awareness of the services that are offered at the One-Stop Career Centers
2. Locating sites so that they are easy to find and get to
3. Making the resource room navigable and the resources usable

This chapter explores the approaches used by the One-Stop Career Centers in this study to implement these three strategies. It also discusses the accommodations centers make to serve customers with special needs, including those with physical disabilities, limited English proficiency, low literacy, and limited computer skills. The focus is on the centers visited in the round-two data collection.

Promoting Public Awareness of Services

Little marketing is conducted specifically for resource rooms and self-services. Instead, outreach is conducted on either a broad level to customers coming into the center (regardless of the level or specificity of services they are eligible for or desire to use) or is specifically targeted at sub-populations.

General Marketing and Outreach

When LWIAs conduct general marketing, they most commonly use the following methods:

- **Print Advertising.** Most centers have developed brochures that describe the array of services, resources, and programs accessible through the One-Stop

¹ Rules and Regulations. Federal Register. Friday, August 11, 2000. Vol. 65, No. 156, p. 49294.

delivery system. Brochures are either sent as mailers or deposited in strategic locations for potential customers to pick up.

- **Videos.** Some local areas, such as Trident, have developed videos designed to promote the local One-Stop delivery system to job seekers and employers.
- **Advertisements in Public Media.** Many One-Stop Career Centers choose to advertise in public media sources such as radio, television, billboards, and newspapers.
- **Presentations and Special Events.** Several centers indicated that they attract job seekers by participating in job fairs and business expos, and by giving presentations to potential customers. One center, for example, has created extensive linkages with high school and college students through presentations at their institutions.

However, the use of these means of advertising is limited for two primary reasons. One explanation for this relative lack of promotion is the limited availability of financial resources that can be used for such efforts. In five LWIAs, outreach was the first item reduced when budgets had to be cut. Another reason for limited marketing is that center staff perceive that they could not accommodate the larger customer base that outreach would create. Three centers reported that they were reluctant to conduct large-scale marketing efforts out of concern that their centers were already at full capacity and could not adequately serve larger numbers of customers. The centers noted that only if more funding for staff and space expansion became available could they accommodate more customers and contemplate more outreach.

A strategy that some centers use to compensate for their limited marketing is to conduct more-focused advertising. One center began to focus outreach entirely on the services it provides after a customer survey revealed that many customers come to the One-Stop Career Center without knowing what is actually offered. This center has also focused its advertisements more narrowly, directing them to particular geographic areas or towards populations with high unemployment. Another center reported that keeping its website current and appealing is its priority now, since this can be done at relatively low cost.

Marketing and Outreach to Targeted Populations

Although self-services are not typically singled out in advertising campaigns, specific populations that might be served by them are. All of the centers in this study conduct some form of outreach to attract individuals from specific population groups into the resource room. Target populations include demographic groups with a high number of unemployed or underemployed workers, particularly underrepresented or underserved groups, or populations who are eligible for special programs, such as dislocated workers.

Another example of marketing efforts directed toward specific populations is the practice of preemptively reaching target groups before they reach the point of actually needing the center's

services. Oakland hands out flyers to parolees in halfway homes before they are fully reintegrated and to members of youth organizations before they graduate from school.

Methods of Recruitment

Given that marketing is not common, how do One-Stop Career Centers attract customers to their resource rooms? Two methods predominate: (1) partner referrals and linkages, and (2) word-of-mouth.

Referrals and Linkages with One-Stop Partners

All centers have established referral linkages or co-location agreements with partners that encourage participants in specialized programs to use the resources and tools available in the resource room. Centers rely on these partner programs and agencies to advertise the services and tools the resource room has to offer and refer their clients. Examples of referring partners include, but are not limited to, WIA partners and government agencies, such as TANF and Food Stamps programs, and community organizations. Referrals are also made during Rapid Response orientations held on- or off-site. A major additional source of outreach is ES, which sends letters to UI claimants to inform them that they are expected to report to the center for an appointment with a case manager and orientation. After the orientation, customers are typically instructed to use the resource room.

Word-Of-Mouth and Reputation

One of the most cost-effective means of recruiting customers is word-of-mouth. Every One-Stop Career Center included in this study mentioned word-of-mouth as a significant source of customers. For example, one One-Stop Career Center administrator mentioned that when he began his tenure as a new hire there were only 38 active cases. Without an advertising budget, he had to count on word-of-mouth to increase the number of customers. To make sure existing customers provided favorable reports to their friends and acquaintances, he turned over ineffective staff and instilled a culture of customer service and customer-oriented care. Within six months the number of customers had increased to 226. As one administrator noted, “people like to talk,” and when they have good things to say, it creates a self-perpetuating system of advertisement: people go to the center, they learn about the services, they tell other people of their positive experience, and more people come to the center to continue the cycle.

Many centers also benefit from having had a long-term presence in an area. Some have been providing various forms of career assistance for years or were the places individuals went to file for Unemployment Insurance. Consequently, they are known in the community as places to receive job assistance. More generally, in areas with high unemployment or frequent layoffs, the typical resident is generally familiar with the public workforce investment system or knows someone who is. In these areas, many people are generally aware of the local One-Stop Career

Center, even if they are not necessarily familiar with the self-directed services the resource room has to offer.

Site Accessibility

In an effort to maximize physical accessibility and visibility, most centers in this study have located their sites where they can be easily found and visited by a large number of customers. Others are less geographically accessible and offer lessons about characteristics that deter access.

Locational Features that Facilitate Access

The majority of One-Stop Career Centers are easily accessible because they have one or more of the following features:

- **Location near Public Transportation Facilities.** All comprehensive One-Stop Career Centers in this study were located within close proximity to public transportation. Some centers located themselves near other widely used services and popular areas where public transportation was already established. However, the experiences of other LWIAs show that it is possible for a One-Stop Career Center to draw public transportation to it. For example, when Trident was choosing a location for its center, administrators found a large building in a business park that they were interested in, but it was not on any bus routes. The executive director of the LWIA negotiated with the local transportation authority and the business park to reroute major bus lines into the parking lot. Customers are now dropped off at the front door, and, in exchange, bus drivers use the far end of the expansive parking lot for break periods.
- **Adequate Parking.** An appropriate quantity of parking spaces is necessary for customers to easily access the One-Stop Career Center by car. The majority of centers have dedicated parking with sufficient spaces designated for disabled access.
- **Location in the Center of the Urban Area.** Some One-Stop Career Centers operate in central locations with high visibility and easy access. The Richmond One-Stop Career Center, for example, is roughly in the center of the city, close to city hall and major public transportation hubs. Another study found that some LWIAs prefer a strategy of having fewer but more centralized centers, because it allows more partners to be co-located and more services to be provided at each single location.² Besides downtown areas, good centralized locations for One-Stop Career Centers include those in close proximity to strip malls, the Department of Labor building, and county seats.
- **Location in Neighborhood Centers.** In contrast to choosing a few, centralized locations, another approach to facilitating access is to locate centers within

² K. Dunham, A. Goger, J. Henderson-Frakes, and N. Tucker, *Workforce Development in Rural Areas: Changes in Access, Service Delivery, and Partnerships* (Social Policy Research Associates, 2005).

neighborhoods. This way, customers do not need to travel long distances to receive services, and centers can more easily cater to the needs of the local community. Usually this strategy entails having a greater number of centers than would be the case if centralization were the priority.

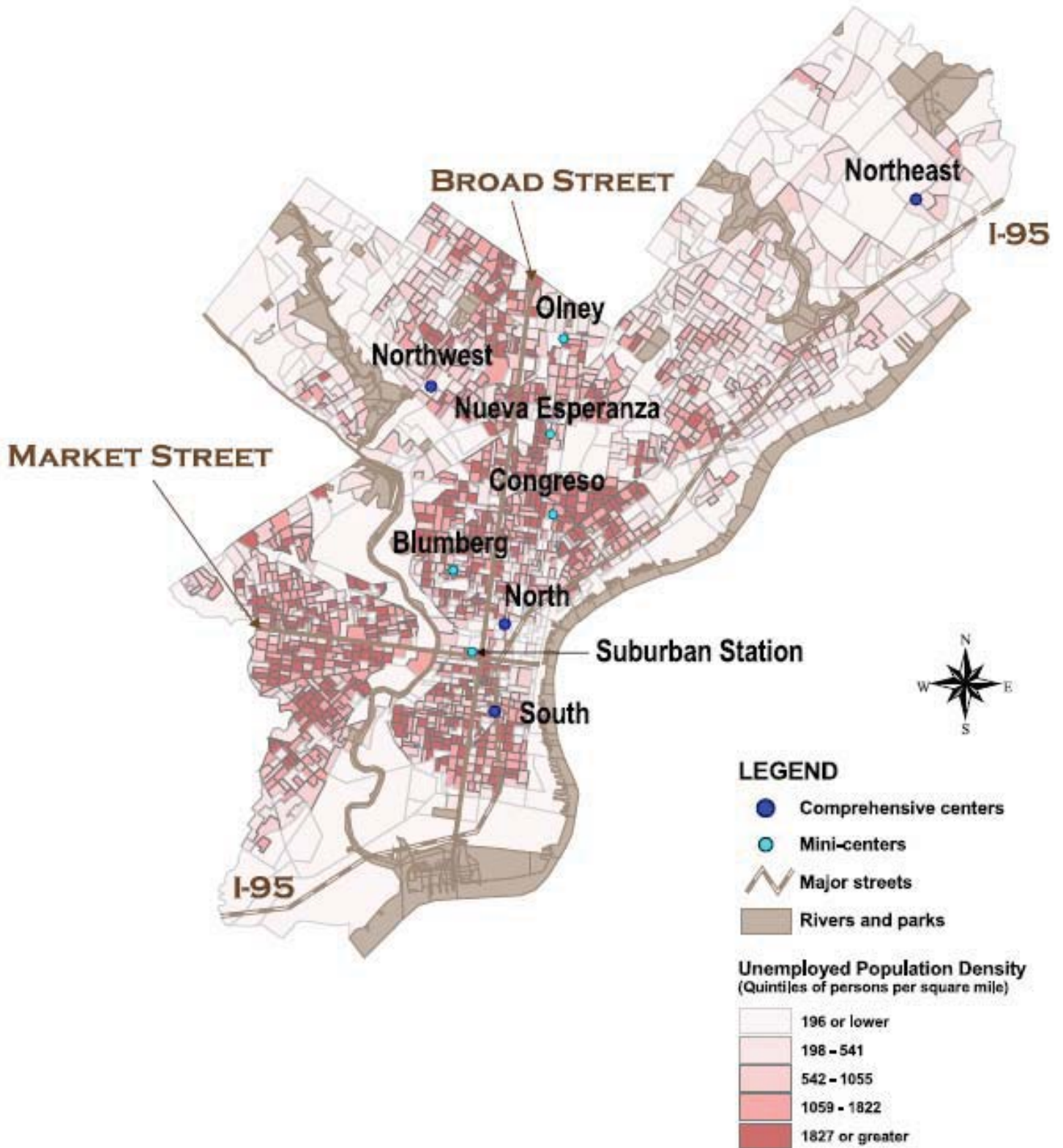
Sacramento offers an example of the neighborhood approach. When researching where to locate One Stop Career Centers, the LWIA contracted a consultant to provide demographic data from all communities in Sacramento County. The consultant also held public hearings around the county to create community discussions and get feedback about the best locations at which to open One-Stop Career Centers.

Philadelphia's CareerLink system also exemplifies the neighborhood approach, with its four full-service access points around the city as well as a number of satellites that provide most customers with a relatively local site at which they can access services. To illustrate how this approach works in practice, Exhibit IV-1 maps this LWIA's comprehensive and satellite centers relative to the number of unemployed persons in the population. This display shows that access points are generally proximal to the largest concentrations of the unemployed, suggesting that decisions about where to locate centers were strategically made. (One exception might be for unemployed individuals in the western reaches of this LWIA's service area, who seem to need to travel a further distance to access services than others.)

Similarly, a map of the location of the LWIA's comprehensive centers relative to where the centers' customers reside was also plotted. The patterns, shown in Exhibit IV-2, suggest the following:

- Centers do seem to be strategically located, in that most customers come from high unemployment areas (see Exhibit IV-1) and reside in proximity to the center from which they sought services.
- Notwithstanding the above, customers are clustered much more tightly around some centers (e.g., the "South" comprehensive center) than others (e.g., "Northeast"). Furthermore, some centers seem to attract customers from further away, even when another center may be nearer to them. In particular, the "North" center, which is the largest, oldest, and best-known center, attracts the most customers from other areas of the LWIA.
- Some customers, though a relatively small proportion, apparently reside outside this LWIA's boundaries.

Exhibit IV-1:
CareerLink Centers Relative to the Unemployed Population

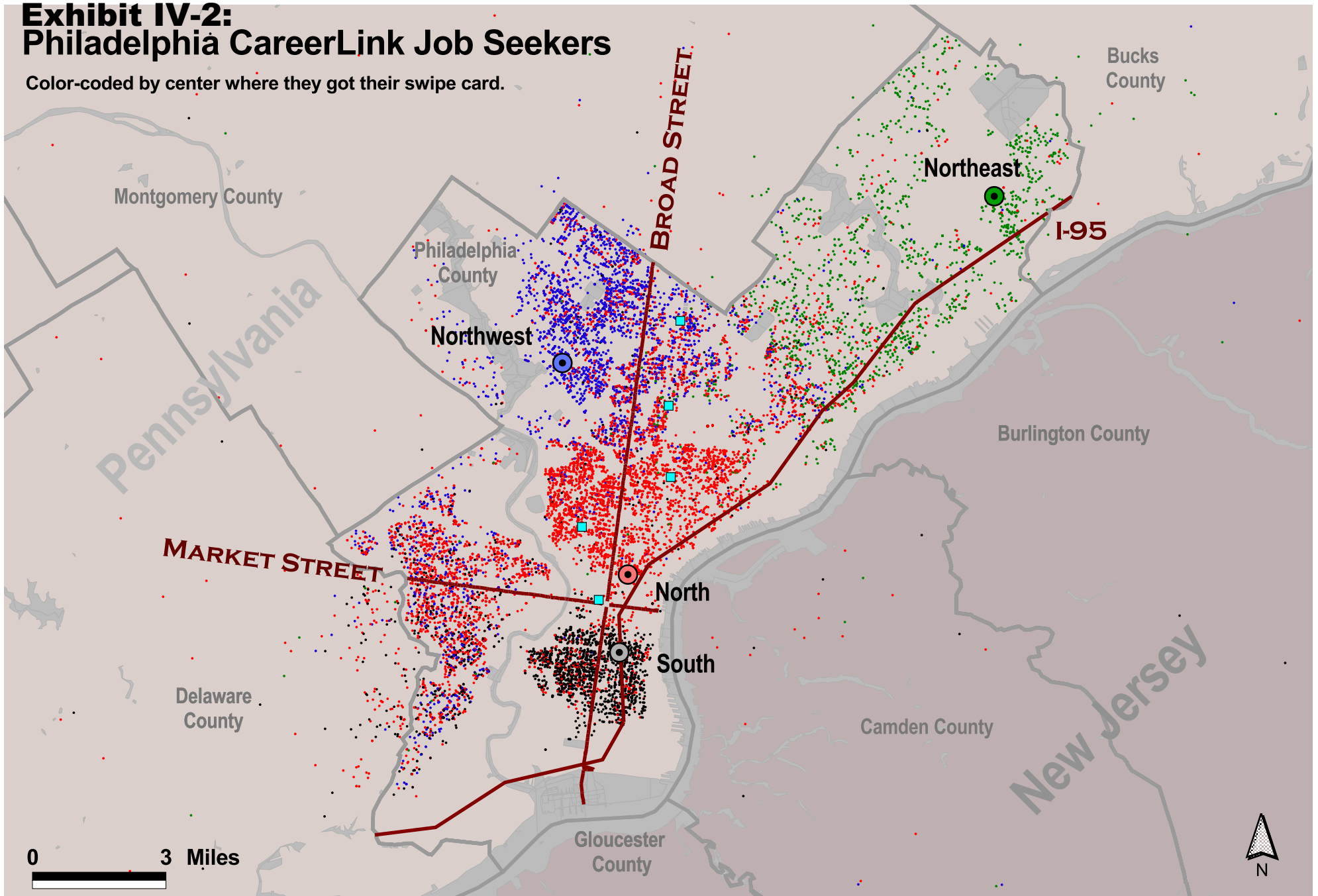


0 4 Miles






Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000.

Exhibit IV-2: Philadelphia CareerLink Job Seekers





Color-coded by center where they got their swipe card.






CareerLink Centers

-  North
-  Northeast
-  Northwest
-  South
-  Mini Centers (no address data)

Job Seeker Addresses

-  Customers from North
-  Customers from Northeast
-  Customers from Northwest
-  Customers from South

Base Layer

-  Rivers and parks
-  County boundaries
-  Main Streets

Sources:
TIGER/Line® Files, U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000. Shapefiles provided by ESRI.
CareerLink Swipe Card Database, Dec. 2002 - Jul. 2004.

These findings, taken together, suggest that conflicting considerations—particularly ease of access counterbalanced by the apparent desire to seek services in known and familiar locations—come into play in determining which centers customers will use.

External Features that Deter Access

Not all locations are easily accessible or incorporate the features listed above. In fact, a small number of One-Stop Career Centers in the study have features that would seem to restrict access, such as poor signage, limited parking, and out-of-the-way locations.

- **Limited Visibility.** Limited visibility from the street is a potential access barrier for customers, as is the lack of easy-to-see and clearly marked signage. Seven centers had limited signage or were hidden from the main street behind other buildings. This makes it difficult for drivers to know when to turn, and leaves customers on foot wandering to locate the entrance. Because they lacked adequate signage directly on the building, three centers were difficult to find without an exact address.
- **Limited Parking.** Limited parking presents another barrier to drivers and disabled customers. Two One-Stop Career Centers had a limited number of disabled parking spaces, which seemed insufficient to meet customer needs based on the estimated number of disabled customers that use the center. One One-Stop Career Center had no dedicated parking at all, leaving customers with vehicles to rely on limited street parking or expensive private garages.
- **Remote Locations.** One-Stop Career Centers in business parks or at a distance from urban centers cannot be easily reached by pedestrians or public transportation users, and they are less likely to become known by potential customers. While less-than-ideal siting is unavoidable in some cases, three locations appeared to be further than necessary from settings that customers might already frequent.
- **Limited Transportation Options.** Centers in more rural areas often are not accessible by regularly scheduled public transportation, which can discourage access for some customers. (As a remedy, authorities in one rural LWIA arranged for on-demand van services, although this option is more expensive and can be less reliable than regular-route public transportation.³)

Usability of Resources

Once customers enter the resource room, the services and resources offered must be easily accessible and usable. In an effort to promote usability, centers have developed an array of features to assist customers, including an appealing physical layout and modern equipment.

³ Dunham, K., Goger, A., Henderson-Frakes, J., and N. Tucker, op.cit.

Additional features of resource rooms, such as extended hours or childcare service, can also be helpful.

Layout and Equipment

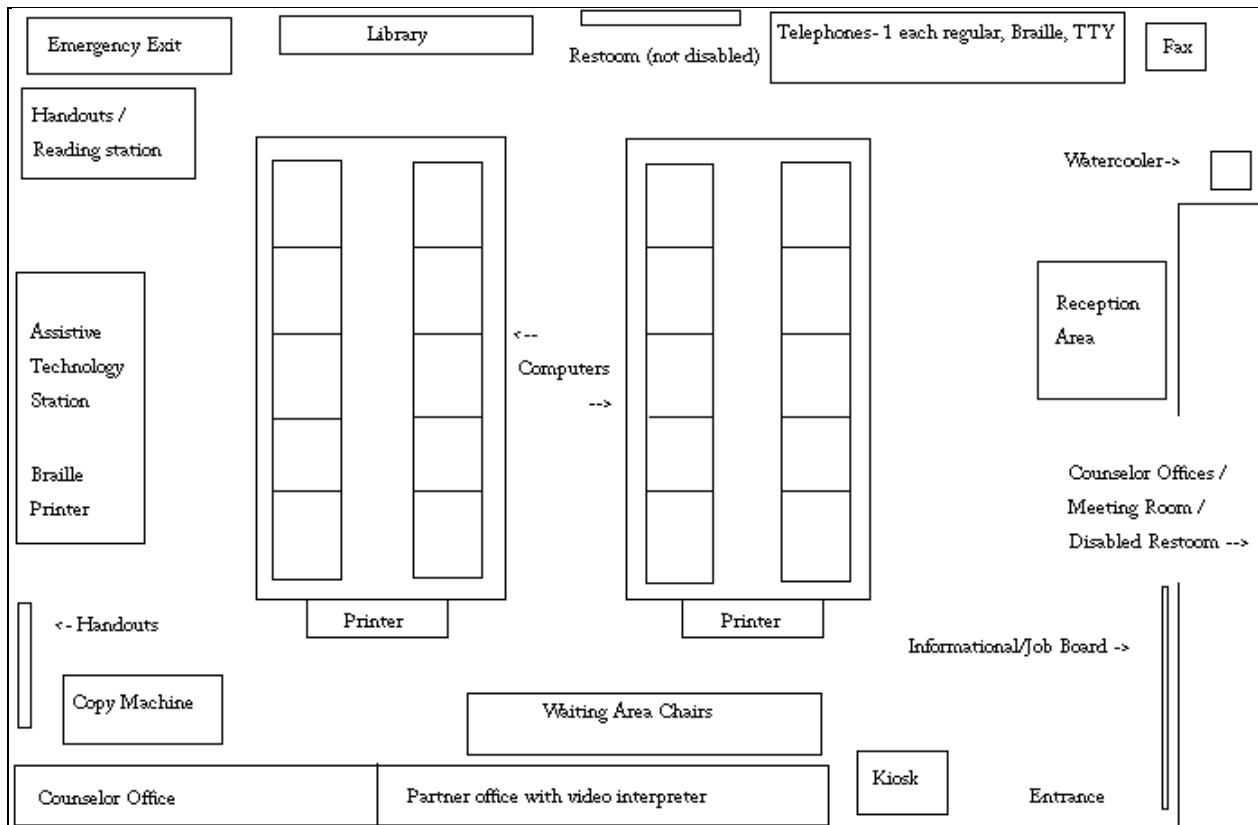
An appealing physical layout of the resource room was a commonly cited strength, mentioned by one-quarter of all respondents in the 2006 local-area survey (see Chapter III). Among those who cited this strength, a significant portion mentioned that the physical layout of their resource rooms presented an inviting and professional atmosphere with ample space to meet peak customer flows.

While the resource rooms visited for this study varied in size and in the details of their physical arrangements, they typically exemplified these strengths. They also shared similar components. For example, upon entering the resource room, customers usually encounter a desk where resource room staff orient customers to available services. In addition, since computers are the focal point of self-directed services, all resource rooms contain a significant number of computers. Computer stations are typically arranged in rows, either along a wall or in a row of desks in the middle of the room. Cubicles or hutches are the most common way to ensure customers' privacy while they use computer stations.

Other common elements include workstations or tables for customers to sit at, phone stations for them to make free local calls for employment-related purposes, phone and/or computer stations dedicated to provide UI access, and a library or other hardcopy document area. Exhibit IV-3 shows one example of a resource room layout that shares common elements with others in this study.

Having state-of-the-art equipment was also mentioned as a key strength by respondents to the local-area survey. Very often, these respondents boasted that their computer equipment had recently been upgraded or that their software was customer friendly. Conversely, of the LWIAs that expressed dissatisfaction with their current self-services, one-third mentioned the need for general infrastructural improvements, such as better or upgraded equipment, more space, or improved tools.

Exhibit IV-3: Sample Resource Room Layout



Regardless of design or layout, every resource room in this study contained the following elements. Each element has the potential to either facilitate or deter access to services, depending on how it is managed or implemented.

- **Computers.** Considering that the majority of resources and tools in the resource room are available electronically on computers and the Internet, adequate access to computers is very important. Most centers had acceptable numbers of computers, although many indicated they would like more if they had additional funding and space. Wait times for computers were generally reported as minimal overall. However, during peak times a waitlist does develop at many centers, causing centers to establish policies that place a time limit on computer usage when others are waiting. Given the emphasis placed on computer-based resources, customers wanting this tool can do little while waiting for a work station.
- **Workspace.** In the spirit of continuous improvement, resource room staff report they could serve their customers better with more space. While some centers have benefited from remodeling their resource rooms to be more comfortable and spacious, not all have been able to do so. Cramped space, lack of privacy, crowded furniture that impedes access for the disabled, and customer demand that

causes congestion at times are major limitations to the adequacy of some facilities.

- **Noise level.** Despite varying levels of customer usage and density, none of the resource room staff complained of persistently high noise levels. Disturbances are occasionally reported, but there are no consistent challenges. However, customers can sometimes get loud when talking on the telephones and distract the rest of the resource room.
- **Privacy.** Lack of privacy when using resource room telephones is the largest complaint from customers. This issue may be irresolvable, however, because usually phones are located with minimal privacy so resource room staff can monitor conversations to ensure they are business-related.
- **Signage.** In most centers, signage is adequate to provide customers with a quick orientation to services. However, improvements often seemed called for. In some LWIAs, signs in the reception area, above computers or equipment, or on the walls either are absent or tell customers only what *not* to do, instead of displaying directions or instructions.

Additional Features that Promote Access

In addition to the standard features noted above, the following features were used by a limited number of One-Stop Career Centers to broaden their customer bases. These special features not only increase the number of people who can use the centers, but attract customers to the center in the first place.

- **Extended Hours of Operation.** The transition to comprehensive One-Stop Career Centers expands potential customer profiles to include those who already have jobs but are looking to secure better ones. Centers that provide services only during traditional business hours limit the number of working individuals who can access the resource room. A limited number of centers have extended hours during evenings and weekends to provide times during which customers who cannot visit the center during regular business hours can use the resource room. At the same time, a number of other centers discontinued the practice of having extended hours as a result of low customer volume and a reluctance of some staff to work non-traditional hours.
- **Childcare.** Many One-Stop Career Centers provide additional services to increase the accessibility of the center for customers with young children. Three One-Stop Career Centers either provide childcare or have a representative onsite to register eligible customers for childcare subsidies or nearby childcare services. Two centers do not provide childcare but allow children in the resource room and supply crayons and toys to keep them occupied.

Accessibility for Customers with Special Needs

In keeping with the principles of universal access, the One-Stop delivery system seeks to provide services to all individuals regardless of employment status, language ability, skill sets, family

responsibilities, or physical ability. Under WIA, all job seekers are welcome, which entails providing certain accommodations for customers with disabilities, language barriers, and poor computer skills.

Accommodating Disabled Customers

As part of serving a diverse population, special provisions are necessary for customers with disabilities. Federal law requires that all One-Stop Career Centers comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which includes considering ADA accommodations when designing the centers. Efforts to meet these requirements, and go beyond them, include designing the center and the resource room with disabled customers in mind, making physical accommodations, providing assistive technology and alternative formats, and supporting customers with staff assistance. Most efforts are focused on providing adaptive equipment and offering strong referral or co-located linkages with organizations having a focus on serving customers with disabilities.

Physical Accommodations in Facilities

As mentioned above, centers in this study are required by law to meet basic ADA requirements regarding physical accessibility in their buildings. Additional accommodations can also be made to improve access for customers with mobility impairments. These physical accommodations include the following:

- handicapped parking in close proximity to entrances
- an adequate number of handicapped parking spaces⁴
- curb cuts and external walkways easily navigable by people using wheelchairs or crutches
- automatic or button-controlled doors
- doorways wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs⁵
- door thresholds and door mats easily navigable by wheelchairs
- signs at non-accessible entryways or doors directing customers to accessible entrances
- accessible restrooms⁶
- alternatives to stairs or steps, such as ramps or elevators

⁴ Defined as one designated handicapped space per 25 non-designated spaces.

⁵ Defined as a minimum of 32 inches wide.

⁶ Defined as having stalls with minimum dimensions of 36 inches by 69 inches, sink height of 34 inches, and faucets workable with a closed fist.

- gradual ramps at an appropriate grade
- a five-foot-long level landing at the bottom of every ramp, or after 30 feet of ramp
- six feet of sturdy railing on every ramp⁷
- elevators sized to accommodate wheelchairs⁸
- braille and/or raised instructions on elevator buttons and door jambs, and to identify floors
- visible and audible door opening/closing and floor indicators on elevators
- elevator call buttons at 42-inch maximum height

Despite ADA requirements, not all facilities are equal in their attempts at facilitating access to individuals with disabilities. High registration counters, cramped or over-crowded rooms, out-of-reach equipment, and heavy manual doors are some examples field staff encountered that would seem to impede access.

Older buildings and strict lease agreements can impede efforts to make centers and resource rooms physically accessible. In one LWIA, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) representative reported that interactions with leasing agencies are very complicated in regard to building modifications. For example, multiple One-Stop Career Centers had heavy doors that were not easily opened, but the centers were unable to replace them due to building and lease regulations. Furthermore, leasing companies that rent out One-Stop Career Center facilities can be slow to update their facilities to facilitate access, and sometimes it takes multiple letters of request before they comply. Accommodations external to the center itself, such as curb cuts to facilitate wheelchair access, can be especially difficult, since they may entail dealing with city governments, which can often be a slow process.

Providing Resources in Alternative Formats

All centers provide some level of adaptive equipment that enables customers with hearing, vision, or mobility impairments to access self-service resources. These types of assistive technology and accommodations include the following:

- alternate formats for applications, brochures, and written materials (Braille, large print, disk copies, tapes)
- screen magnification software (e.g., Zoomtext)
- screen reader for computers (e.g., JAWS)
- assistive computer input technology such as alternative keyboards and mice

⁷ Railing must be 34 to 38 inches in height.

⁸ Must include enough space for a motorized wheelchair and have 32-inch-wide doorways.

- computer instructions written in sixth-grade language
- Braille instructions on fax machine, copy machine, etc.
- TTY (used to type messages rather than using voice over a telephone line)
- computer workstations accessible to wheelchairs
- fax, copy, and printer equipment positioned low enough for wheelchair access.

Providing alternative formats and resources improves access to self-services for those who would otherwise not be able to use the resource room without staff assistance. However, in many of the centers, assistive technology is rarely used and therefore stored to save space when not needed. Funding for such equipment is also limited and in some LWIAs it is distributed among centers so that not all resource rooms contain the same equipment. VR staff at one center added that it is not practical to have all assistive technology in all centers in more rural areas, because the need for these devices is low and the budget for them can be spent on other, more-utilized areas. Furthermore, most disabled customers do not use the resource room until they meet with a VR representative first; thus, resource room staff feel they have time to prepare and make accommodations when necessary.

Staff-Assisted Accommodations

Despite the presence of physical and technological accommodations, many customers with disabilities require some staff assistance to navigate and use the resource rooms. Staff provide, or are at least trained to provide, the following accommodations:

- sign language interpreters
- assistance with assistive technology
- assistance as a sighted guide

At the same time, most staff report that they have limited experience providing assistance to customers with disabilities and that there is a limited need for such assistance. They report that few customers with physical impairments come into the resource rooms, and fewer do so without a VR counselor or companion. Arguably, however, usage would increase if centers were found to be better prepared.

Assisting Customers with Cognitive Impairments

Assisting customers with cognitive impairments represents one of the greatest challenges to promoting access among individuals with disabilities. Cognitive disabilities are categorized as those involving memory, perception, problem solving, and conceptualizing. They range from mild learning disabilities to severe retardation, and therefore functional limitations vary widely. Serving customers with cognitive impairments is challenging because of this variability, the often “invisible” nature of the impairments, and the reluctance of customers to disclose their

impairments or be referred to special services. Furthermore, there are few assistive devices for people with cognitive impairments.

No centers in this study provide explicit accommodations to customers with cognitive impairments, beyond referrals to VR. Some assistive equipment meant for other special-needs customers—such as screen enlargers, resources for those with limited English proficiency, or voice-read-out software—may be of help, but providing adequate staff assistance is the greatest challenge. Of the staff that commented on their engagement with customers with cognitive impairments, all expressed a dearth of training. Only one center reported receiving safety and crisis training, which contained a module on mental and emotional emergencies but nothing on assisting customers with utilizing self-services.

Training Staff to Provide Assistance to Customers with Disabilities

Training for resource room staff on serving customers with disabilities has the potential to increase awareness and sensitivity to the unique issues that this population faces. However, staff with training and experience in serving customers with disabilities is not a standard feature in the resource rooms visited.

Vocational Rehabilitation offers free training for workforce staff, but not every One-Stop Career Center has taken advantage of this service. Two centers took advantage of an online Disability Navigator⁹ training that provides instruction on issues of access, how to work with clients with disabilities, and how to handle legal issues. But only one center reported regular, monthly professional development on how to work with people with disabilities (this center, however, is operated by an organization focused on delivering services to people with disabilities). Additionally, three One-Stop Career Centers mentioned receiving training from ES that contained a module on working with customers with disabilities.

Compounding the issue of limited training is the effect of high staff turnover, which makes it difficult to keep trained staff in the resource rooms. Often, staff receive training in assistive technology or on how to assist customers with disabilities, only to move on to another job without transferring this knowledge to the replacement.

Role of Vocational Rehabilitation

Vocational Rehabilitation broadly provides services and advocacy to individuals with disabilities, to help them prepare for and access suitable employment. Each state is responsible for the administration of its Department of Vocational Rehabilitation or equivalent, and is guided by a number of federal acts including the Workforce Investment Act, the Rehabilitation Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act, among others. VR typically provides employment services

⁹ The Disability Program Navigator is described later in this chapter.

and counseling, arranges for services for individuals to get to work, and provides training and technical assistance to employers regarding disability employment issues. Within the One-Stop delivery system, VR also provides staff training to partners.

In order to assist customers with disabilities, resource room staff make referrals to VR. In all cases, the referral process was noted as very informal. Staff members usually make a simple phone call, send an email, or walk to the office if VR is co-located. A sentiment that was repeated by respondents at multiple centers was that the relationship with VR was as functional as it needed to be, meaning that a strong collaboration was not necessary. Multiple VR staff who were interviewed mentioned that it is not common for a disabled customer to use the resource room prior to meeting with a VR representative. Very commonly, in fact, VR staff will accompany customers with disabilities in the resource room at least the first time to orient them to the services, thus reducing the burden on regular resource room staff and further facilitating access to expert assistance.

One VR representative did express a desire for greater cooperation between VR and the resource room, citing the need for better job placement for VR clients and services to employers. In areas with more disabled customers, VR expressed the importance of solid communication and regular partner meetings.

Role of the Disability Program Navigator

Funded by the Department of Labor and the Social Security Administration, the Disability Program Navigator (DPN) serves as a resource to the staff of a One-Stop Career Center in promoting comprehensive services to people with disabilities through the One-Stop delivery system. Responsibilities of the DPN include:

- facilitating seamless and comprehensive services for individuals with disabilities in the One-Stop Career Center
- serving as a resource for One-Stop Career Center staff
- improving linkages to employers
- fostering interagency collaboration to address issues of access¹⁰

The DPN program has limited funding, and therefore not all One-Stop Career Centers in this study have this position. The centers with a DPN were in various stages of implementation, ranging from having just received funding to hire a DPN staff member to involving the DPN in

¹⁰ Department of Labor, E.T.A. (07/30/2009). *Disability Program Navigator Initiative*. Retrieved 08/25/2009, from Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration: www.doleta.gov/disability/onepagere/DPN_FACTSHEET_March2009.pdf

such activities as assessing the One-Stop Career Center for accessibility, managing referrals, and delivering workshops.

Accommodating Customers with Literacy and Language Barriers

Limited English-proficient customers, non-native speakers, and customers with limited literacy present challenges to One-Stop Career Centers and require additional resources, staff assistance, and alternative modes of delivering services. Although such customers may be skilled workers, their language challenges can prevent them from fully utilizing the resource room without assistance. This section discusses the challenges these customers face in using self-services and the accommodations the One-Stop Career Centers in this study have made to serve them.

Limited English Proficient

Approximately 60 percent of LWIAs nationwide identified accommodating customers with limited English abilities as a moderate to substantial challenge (see Chapter III). As populations of non-native English speakers and the foreign-born labor force in the U.S. grow, One-Stop Career Centers in certain regions must adjust to provide adequate access to self-services for customers who speak and write languages other than English. This can be costly, because it entails providing translation services, duplicative resources in alternative languages, and bilingual staff.

Despite limited financial resources and other barriers, centers have used the following approaches to facilitate access for limited English-proficient customers:

- ***Translated materials.*** Resources rooms provide translated materials, including information on partners and referral services, instructions to help navigate services, and who to ask for help. Also prevalent were various resources, such as online job searches, websites, fraud abuse hotlines, LMI data, flyers, and printed materials, written or presented in languages other than English.
- ***Non-English Workshops.*** Centers provide workshops in multiple languages, primarily Spanish, on résumé development, interviewing, and computer skills. General orientations and tours are also provided.
- ***Referrals and further assistance.*** Despite efforts to make accommodations, many customers need further language development to be successful in their career development. Referrals to English as a Second Language (ESL) classes and Adult Education are available in most locations.
- ***Alternative language services.*** Centers provide varying levels of language services to assist customers in the resource room. Some centers employ bilingual resource room staff who are available for customers. Other centers without full-time bilingual staff in the resource room are able to borrow bilingual staff from other departments or partners on demand.

- **Remote translation services.** Some centers without bilingual staff take advantage of telephone translation services available in an extensive list of languages.

In spite of these efforts, comprehensive language support in the resource rooms was lacking overall, and not a standard practice. For example, at least one center had no arrangements for speakers of languages other than English, and two had limited resources for languages other than English and Spanish.

Given these limitations, centers able to make greater accommodations became a magnet for those needing language assistance to obtain employment. For example, customers at one center reportedly drive from areas served by other One-Stop Career Centers to use the bilingual staff at the center, based on the center's positive reputation.

Limited Literacy

Since most services in the resource room require basic literacy, individuals with very low literacy are not helped by having access to translated materials or materials worded using simple language. Resource room staff can assist customers with basic literacy in navigating resources, but do not have the time to assist those with more limited abilities or to help them improve their abilities.

Basic resource room accommodations for those with limited literacy include materials written at a sixth-grade reading level, color-coded signs to designate services and departments, one-on-one assistance, and computer-based literacy improvement software. One resource room staff member said that customers with low literacy usually discretely ask for these services themselves. Beyond these accommodations, most centers feel that customers without a functional level of literacy require additional services and cannot fully benefit from self-services at One-Stop Career Centers. Fortunately, they are almost always eligible for programs in which they can receive additional services. Consequently, resource room staff make referrals to Adult Education, free literacy courses offered in the community, and General Educational Development (GED) programs.

Accessibility for Customers with Limited Computer Skills

Computer skills are essential for accessing all that the resource room has to offer, as discussed earlier in this report. Moreover, staff view learning how to operate a computer as an empowering process, giving customers both confidence and valuable job skills. This section describes the tools and resources available to assist customers with limited computer skills.

Customer Readiness for Using Computers

Although the level of computer literacy that is required to use computer-based and online resources is fairly basic, resource room staff across the country report significant numbers of

customers are not even at this level because they are too intimidated by or do not know how to use computers at all. In fact, as customers navigate self-services, the most common request for assistance is with using the computers. A One-Stop Career Center in California estimates that one in ten customers lack proficient skills to use the computer themselves. At the other extreme, a One-Stop Career Center in Texas estimates that 90 percent of customers need assistance with the computers. Of the LWIAs surveyed as part of the 2006 local-area survey, nearly 80 percent of respondents reported that accommodating those with poor computer skills was a substantial or moderate challenge, indicating that this is indeed a significant challenge for resource room staff (see Chapter III). Resource room staff attribute the lack of computer skills among some customers to low educational attainment, limited skill requirements in past jobs, and age.

Types of Assistance

One-Stop Career Centers used a number of means to assist customers with limited computer skills, including providing printed instructions, one-on-one staff assistance, workshops, and referrals. The type of assistance given varies, depending on the customer's existing level of computer skills, the type of tool the customer is using, the policies for delivering customer assistance, and often the philosophy of the resource room staff.

- ***Printed instructions.*** To reduce the amount of staff time invested in teaching customers to use computer-based self-service tools, centers make use of written instruction. The details of these instructions vary from simple lists to extensive help. South Plains has developed an entire binder of step-by-step instructional materials written in simple language with computer screen images to help customers navigate through numerous self-service tools. Resource room staff commented that it is easier to demonstrate in person the use of a tool, but the written instructions are particularly helpful for repeat customers who simply need technical reminders.
- ***Informal staff assistance.*** Typically, staff assistance on the computers is integral to orienting the majority of customers to the tools and resources that are available. Without staff assistance, computers would most likely be under-utilized; this is one reason it is common for staff to spend time helping customers with computer access. At the same time, resource constraints severely limit the amount of one-on-one assistance that can be provided in the resource room, leaving many customers without adequate support.
- ***Orientations or classes.*** One-on-one staff assistance is time consuming. Some of the local areas consolidate instructional efforts by offering basic computer skills courses. Some One-Stop Career Centers provide free computer courses, but referrals are also made to Adult Education or to free courses offered by partners.
- ***Computer tutorials.*** Computer-based support is a common method of assisting customers with limited computer skills without increasing staff workloads. With limited staff assistance, customers can be directed to computer-based and online courses or tutorials that teach them basic skills. In the local-area survey, a

number of LWIAs mentioned having software designed to boost computer literacy as the specific service of which they were proudest.

- **Non-computer resources.** Despite assistance, some customers choose not to use computer-based resources. Libraries, booklets and guides, printed information off the Internet, newspapers, and hard-copy LMI data are the resources most frequently offered to these individuals. Many of the One-Stop Career Centers have tools that are only available in hard copy, not online. For example, many have only hard-copy handouts for youth, partner materials, job leads, books, and some assessment tools like the Wunderlich¹¹ assessment. Still, this set of tools is not as comprehensive as those available online. Additionally, most hard-copy resources need continual replacement as they become outdated, which can be time consuming, expensive, and a drain on resources. An interview with a customer revealed that he did not feel the hard-copy materials applied to him, because they are geared towards lower-skilled workers and he was a college graduate. Space and budget constraints limit the diversity of hard-copy materials that are provided, whereas the Internet presents no such constraints.

Many staff explained that it is important for them to provide assistance using an approach that will empower customers to use self-service tools on their own. This approach is particularly important because as customers learn how to use most self-service tools they simultaneously develop general computer skills, which are often desired by employers. Additionally, empowering customers to use tools on their own helps them build confidence in themselves and their ability to acquire skills independently.

Assisting customers with poor computer skills is likely to become even more important, at least in the near term, as services become more dependent on computers. Many One-Stop Career Centers reported that they were in the process of moving their resources online or had a goal of an online resource room. One center is trying to implement a paperless resource room and wean customers off hard-copy resources entirely. They have even moved the fax and copy machines out of the main room.

Conclusion

Even though a major goal is for customers to use self-services with minimal staff assistance, resource rooms must make a variety of accommodations in order to be accessible to the universal customer. Ensuring that all job seekers, including those with special needs, have access to the services available means making sure they can physically locate and access the center itself, and that they have the ability to use the tools and resources once they have arrived. This study has revealed some common challenges to ensuring access to a diverse customer base, as well as

¹¹ The Wunderlich assessment is a standardized test used to assess the aptitude of prospective employees for learning and problem solving.

promising practices that assist the universal customer in seeking employment using self-directed services through the One-Stop delivery system.

Promising Practices in Facilitating Access to Self-Services

The One-Stop Career Centers in this study use a variety of methods to attract customers, orient them to services, and assist them in utilizing self-service tools and resources. Particular strategies and practices of note are detailed below.

- **Prioritizing customer service.** A One-Stop Career Center director said that his center tries to serve the customer in every possible way and he encourages staff to be creative and attentive. He believes that keeping a nicely kept and professional office is important. Resource room staff in another center stressed how important it was to take time to listen to clients who are underemployed, which builds their confidence to successfully find a new job. When a staff commits to treating customers in a friendly and positive way, it creates an environment where people feel comfortable and confident, and this is reflected in the reputation of the center in the community.
- **Creating a One-Stop managers' network.** One WIB administrator felt that one of the center's best practices is to treat the One-Stop Career Center managers as a network and have them meet every other month to exchange ideas. The One-Stop Career Center staff of this administrator also meet once per quarter to discuss best practices and challenges. This helps them feel comfortable asking each other for assistance and sharing information regarding best practices in facilitating access to self-services.
- **Using the Disability Program Navigator.** Oyster Bay found that the Disability Program Navigator increased coordination on behalf of persons with disabilities. Having a DPN on staff opened lines of communication between VR and other partners and increased opportunities to collaborate and serve these individuals.
- **Forging extensive partnerships.** Brazos Valley found that a strong practice for its area is to house a large number of programs and services that are highly utilized by its customers for the purpose of eliminating barriers to employment. Having these partners onsite allows the center to better serve its customers and understand their needs because they do not have to send them to different places within the community.

Challenges in Facilitating Access to Self-Services

A number of challenges remain in facilitating access to the tools and resources that support a self-directed approach to gaining employment. Some barriers to achieving that goal are listed below.

- **Under-utilization of services.** Respondents stated that many customers come to the One-Stop Career Center through word-of-mouth, thinking they know what is available and what program they are interested in. It is difficult to convince these customers to take advantage of the other free resources that will help them obtain

or retain employment. Other customers are intimidated to use a computer or afraid to ask for assistance. Having a resource room that is mainly technology-based means that some customers flounder, because the center cannot provide the assistance that is needed. Further, it is difficult to assist customers with special needs if they do not self-identify.

- **Misconceptions among the public.** Sometimes clients have difficulty understanding the difference between the new One-Stop delivery system and the former UI office or the Department of Human Services. Respondents stated that people seeking UI benefits will ask resource room staff numerous questions regarding UI eligibility. Such misperceptions of the function of the One-Stop delivery system result in a larger influx of individuals who are not seeking job search services, leaving resource rooms overcrowded and already strained staff busier.
- **Customers with barriers to employment.** Resource room staff commonly serve customers who have barriers to employment that they are not trained to deal with, such as poor hygiene, mental health problems, emotional disorders, etc. They often function as counselors even though they are not trained to do so.
- **Security.** As a result of a more diverse customer base, some centers have experienced an increase in incidents in which customers have threatened staff members and engaged in fights.
- **Funding inadequate for proper staffing.** A clear challenge to delivering self-services is being able to have an adequate level of staffing. Funding limitations cause many centers to get creative with staffing, which can result in high turnover. One One-Stop Career Center had to lay off some staff and reduce the hours of others due to lack of funding. That center is also reducing hours of operation to further reduce costs, which further hurts customers. An administrator in a different LWIA stated that, while the need for services seemed greater, her budget was half what it was seven years ago. Providing good customer service is key, not only for effective service delivery but also for establishing a positive reputation in the community that can spread through word-of-mouth; yet many centers are challenged to provide adequate staff assistance because funding is too limited.
- **Serving customers with disabilities.** While it appears that One-Stop Career Centers do an adequate job of physically accommodating customers with disabilities, the most significant challenges in serving this population require more than self-directed services. Coordination with VR and community organizations is essential to ensuring that customers with disabilities have a wide selection of services, staff are properly trained to assist them, and employers are educated on accommodations.

V. CUSTOMER TRACKING SYSTEMS

SPR's survey of local area self-services, described in Chapter III, suggests that, as of early 2006, LWIAs nationwide had a limited capacity to comprehensively track customers who access self-services. Although some progress had been made since the survey was first administered in 2003, as of 2006 only 33 percent of LWIAs required all or most on-site self-service users to provide their SSNs. Less common still were requirements that customers provide their basic demographics (24 percent), reasons for using services (22 percent), or work histories (17 percent). Thus, data from the 2006 survey of local-area self-services suggest that LWIAs are far from having implemented comprehensive tracking systems for self-service customers.

Because they have comprehensive tracking systems in place, the LWIAs participating in this study are, in this respect, exceptional. For the most part, these LWIAs request that self-service users provide, at a minimum, their SSNs and basic demographics, and they also generally record *every* time the customer uses self-services on-site at the One-Stop Career Center's resource room. The processes and systems used to capture this information vary among the local areas, however, and each system to some degree presents constraints and challenges. This chapter describes and compares these systems. It begins by describing the tracking mechanisms being used, and then describes the information these systems are capturing. The chapter concludes by providing an overview of the costs, benefits, and limitations of the systems.

Types of Systems

To capture self-service usage among self-service customers, LWIAs are using both local tracking systems and statewide systems. Local systems are the more common of the ones studied, but statewide systems seem to be on the rise; in fact, one LWIA has abandoned its local tracking system in favor of a statewide system since the beginning of the study. These two types of systems are described below and summarized in Exhibit V-1.

Local Area Tracking Systems

Twelve LWIAs visited during round two reported using locally managed data systems to capture self-service usage information. Although the specific tracking mechanisms vary, the general processes are the same. Thus, in each of these LWIAs a customer who visits the resource room

for the first time is required to complete a registration form that elicits the customer’s name, address, SSN, basic demographics, and, in some LWIAs, additional information such as barriers to employment or work history. Following registration, on-site customers receive a membership card with a personal identification number either imprinted on the card or encoded in a magnetic stripe or bar code. Each time customers return to the center, they are required to scan or swipe their card, or provide a membership number for staff at the reception desk to key in.

**Exhibit V-1:
Methods of Tracking**

	Local System	Statewide System
California		
Alameda County	scan card	
Oakland	scan card	
Richmond	scan card	
Riverside	scan card	
Sacramento	scan card	
Colorado		
Boulder		Connecting CO
Georgia		
Fulton County	paper	
Massachusetts		
Metro South		MOSES
New York		
Oyster Bay	swipe card	OSOS
Pennsylvania		
Philadelphia	swipe card (discontinued)	CWDS
South Carolina		
Trident	swipe card	
Texas		
Brazos Valley	swipe card	
South Plains	swipe card	
Washington		
Olympic	keypad entry	SKIES

For example, in California, the Alameda County, Oakland, Richmond, Riverside, and Sacramento LWIAs each use the SMARTware Client Tracking and Case Management System, which uses bar-code technology similar to that used at grocery store checkout counters. SMARTware was developed by California’s Shasta County LWIA; Sacramento (along with three other LWIAs) purchased the system from them in 2000. Since then, a number of other California LWIAs have purchased the necessary licensing fees to join a consortium of SMARTware users. In each LWIA, SMARTware works similarly: the front-desk staff scans the customer’s card when the customer enters the One-Stop Career Center, and then scans one or more bar codes to track a specific activity or service the customer anticipates using during his or

her visit. Each LWIA can determine for itself what activities it wants to track, such as attending an orientation, attending a workshop, preparing a resume, or searching for a job.

Other LWIAs, such as Brazos Valley and South Plains in Texas, and Trident, South Carolina, use swipe cards, which work similarly. A customer registers and is assigned a card during the first visit to the center, and swipes the card during each subsequent visit. Typically, the receptionist at the greeting area also keys in a code denoting which service the customer intends to use.¹

In another model, Olympic, Washington, uses a keypad data-entry system. As part of this system, customers who enter the resource room key in their SSNs at a resource room computer, and then designate on a pop-up menu the services they intend to use that day. Choices include job search, career planning, skill building, resources (phone, fax, copier), and UI. Drawing from this data system, workforce center staff run standard monthly reports, including ones showing total visits at each center,² service usage, and an unduplicated count of customers per month.

Although a majority of the LWIAs visited thus utilize real-time electronic data entry to capture self-service usage, one LWIA (Fulton County) is using a resource room sign-in sheet as its tracking method. This process requires a customer to complete the sign-in sheet each time he or she visits a One-Stop Career Center. Customers are asked to provide basic identifying information (e.g., SSN, date of birth, address, etc.), and check off, from a comprehensive list, all the services they plan on utilizing. Resource room staff later enter this data into a spreadsheet for analysis. Although this method is somewhat time-intensive, the area's One-Stop operator is adamant about the importance of tracking customer usage (to both promote sound program management and ensure accountability) and has found the tracking system useful in fine-tuning the LWIA's service system. For example, based on a report generated from the tracking system data, the One-Stop operator noted that a large number of the area's customers had limited English proficiency, and on that basis made the strategic decision to hire more bilingual staff.

Other LWIAs reported using the sign-in-sheet method at some of their satellite centers. For example, although Brazos Valley uses swipe cards to track self-service usage at its comprehensive One-Stop Career Center, it uses sign-in sheets at its six satellites. Exhibit V-2 provides a copy of the form it uses.

¹ However, one LWIA tracks only the date and time of the visit and nothing about the services.

² The Olympic Workforce Development Area maintains two comprehensive centers and two satellite offices, each of which was using the tracking system.

**Exhibit V-2:
Example Resource Room Sign-In Sheet**

**Workforce Solutions Brazos Valley
Resource Room Sign-In**

Welcome!

SSN _____ Date _____
Name _____ Time _____
Address _____ Phone _____
City _____ Zip Code _____

HOW MAY WE HELP YOU TODAY?

Please all that apply.

- Do you have an appointment with Workforce Staff?
- Received a letter to attend a meeting?
 - WOA (Workforce Orientation for Applicants)
 - EPS (Employment Planning Session)
 - FSEPS (Food Stamps Employment Planning Session)
 - Worker Profiling/UI Orientation (Unemployment)
- Job Search Assistance
- Resume Assistance
- Use Computer Copier Fax Phone
- Labor Market Information
- UI Information
- Veteran's Assistance
- Other _____

Please complete a Customer Satisfaction Survey before you leave so that we can better assist you in the future.

Workforce Solutions Brazos Valley is an Equal Opportunity Employer/Program. Auxiliary aids or services are available upon request to person with disabilities.
TEXAS RELAY (800) 735-2988 TDD (800) 735-2988(Voice)

wfsbv-rrsignin-2007

Washington County

While using scan or swipe cards would seem to be less burdensome than having customers sign in on paper, all locally based methods have their limitations. Among these are cost and cumbersomeness. For example, Philadelphia once used a swipe card system, but abandoned it in favor of a statewide tracking system (described below), because its experience with swipe cards was less than favorable. Among the problems Philadelphia cited were the following:

- The swipe-card system it used was expensive to operate (leasing the equipment, buying supplies, etc.).
- The scanning equipment broke down frequently.
- Customers frequently lost their cards, which then needed to be replaced.
- Staff found the process of scanning cards and keying service codes to be burdensome.
- Due to equipment failures and data-entry errors, data quality was not that good.
- There was some redundancy with the information captured in the state's ES tracking system, at least for the many customers who logged onto this system while in the resource room.

In light of the above problems, the local workforce investment board decided not to renew the contract of the vendor supplying the scanning equipment when its term expired.

Among other endemic problems, all the local tracking methods only very imperfectly capture information about the services that customers use. Either they do not record service information at all (the case in one LWIA), or they record only the services customers *intend* to use when checking in at the reception desk or logging in on a computer. Clearly, customers may use services in addition to the ones they initially intend to use or even change their minds entirely about how to use their time in the resource room; when this occurs, the services actually used are not captured. Furthermore, as will be clear from the analysis presented in Chapter VII, services are not coded in a consistent way across LWIAs and very often not even within an LWIA. As a consequence, making sense of the service usage data that is tabulated can be quite challenging.

Finally, it is not uncommon for customers to provide bogus identifying information when signing in. Even visual inspection makes it clear that a not inconsiderable number of customers provide invalid SSNs when applying for a swipe card. Obviously, this undermines the ability of LWIAs to match the tracking database to state UI wage systems for purposes of measuring customers' employment outcomes.³

³ Customers of the One-Stop delivery system—whether self-service customers or those receiving staff-assisted services—are generally not required to provide their SSNs as a condition of receiving services. Further, LWIAs that track the SSNs of self-service users encounter the considerable obligation of ensuring that these data are

Despite these shortcomings, staff from all the LWIAs being profiled here expressed confidence in their ability to successfully and accurately capture at least basic information about each customer's visit. They could, at a minimum, provide an accurate count of the number of customers who visited and, for the most part, profile these customers' characteristics and frequency of usage accurately. Staff noted that they were aggressive in having each customer record his or her visit in the tracking database and that they would not permit anyone who had not done so to enter the resource room. The one exception to this generalization is that self-service customers at Olympic are captured in that LWIA's tracking system only if they use a computer during their visits (the vast bulk of customers) and not just the fax or phone (a very small number).

Statewide Tracking Systems

Of the fourteen LWIAs visited during round two, five use a statewide tracking system, either solely or as a companion to a local tracking system. These systems are Internet-based and capture information on resource-room users, who are generally required to log on to the system before accessing services.

Oyster Bay, New York, provides a clear example of comprehensive tracking using a statewide system. This LWIA uses the One-Stop Operating System (OSOS) to track customer usage. As described in Chapter II, the State of New York adopted a functional alignment plan, according to which every ES participant is co-enrolled in WIA, and vice versa. Furthermore, nearly all One-Stop Career Center customers are to meet with a case manager, who is to conduct an initial assessment of each customer's need for additional services. According to the state's interpretation of TEGL 17-05, this meeting constitutes "significant staff involvement" and thus causes the customer to be registered in OSOS as a WIA participant. Thus, OSOS serves as a comprehensive tracking system for resource room customers primarily because of the state's policy that there is, practically speaking, no such thing as a customer who receives *only* self-services.

Metro South, in Massachusetts, provides another example of a statewide tracking system that can claim to be comprehensive. The State of Massachusetts designed its system, known as the Massachusetts One-Stop Employment System (MOSES), so that it would have the capability to track all those who access services at any of the state's One-Stop Career Centers. In this context, "self-services" was viewed as another category of service receipt that MOSES was to have the functionality to track. A customer entering a center for the first time is asked to complete a registration form, which entails providing basic demographics and identifying information. In

kept secure if they are maintained as part of a local database. On the other hand, having SSNs makes it possible for LWIAs to match against state UI wage files, providing a means for them to track customers' outcomes.

return, the customer is provided an ID number, which he or she uses at check-in during each subsequent visit. Not all LWIAs across the state might do this as diligently, but Metro South staff are confident that they record the ID number of every customer entering the center. Thus, the system acts like the swipe-card systems in use elsewhere, except that MOSES is Internet-based and was developed and is maintained by the state.

The statewide systems used by other LWIAs seem less comprehensive. Olympic's WorkSource perhaps comes the closest to being comprehensive. Although this LWIA uses keypad entry in a local system to capture resource room visits (as was described above), it also increasingly relies on a statewide data entry system. As part of this system, first-time users complete the WorkSource Customer Registration Form (see Exhibit V-3), and staff input information from the form into the state Services, Knowledge, and Information Exchange Systems, known by its acronym, SKIES.

In addition to tracking resource-room customers' characteristics, SKIES facilitates the queuing of customers to meet with a case manager, through the system's Request for Services (RFS) screen. As part of this feature, the reception desk attendant asks the reason for the customer's visit. If the attendant determines that the customer should speak with a case manager, an entry to that effect is made in the SKIES RFS module. For their part, One-Stop Career Center staff monitor the RFS screen on their desktop computers and can identify if a customer is waiting to speak with a case manager, when the customer arrived, and to which case manager the customer was assigned. The staff member designated to assist the customer will then approach the front desk and escort the customer to a private area for a consultation.

A further feature of SKIES is that it interfaces with the state's TAXIS system, which holds UI wage data. State staff can easily query TAXIS to identify which core service customers entered employment.

These advantages notwithstanding, the extent to which SKIES comprehensively tracks on-site self-service users is questionable. One of this LWIA's administrators estimated that 95 percent of WorkSource self-service customers are entered into SKIES, but case managers estimated the percentage to be closer to 65 percent. Given this uncertainty, Olympic plans on using both SKIES and its local tracking system indefinitely—the former for its greater functionality and ability to track outcomes, and the latter because it more reliably tracks resource room usage.

Philadelphia's statewide tracking system also has limitations from the standpoint of comprehensively tracking self-service users. As noted, the Philadelphia LWIA was initially using a local, swipe-card system for tracking resource-room usage, and was included in the site-visit sample for this reason. However, as noted, it abandoned this system due to its high cost and technical glitches, and has fallen back on a statewide tracking system, the Commonwealth

Exhibit V-3: WorkSource Customer Registration Form



Kitsap, Clallam and Jefferson Counties
PLEASE COMPLETE THE INFORMATION BELOW AND BACK
This Initial Assessment form will not be forwarded to employers (for office use only)

rev. 11.15.07

Date	Mailing Address		
SSN	City	State	Zip
First Name	New Address <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Date of change: (mm/dd/yyyy)		Phone # (include area code)
Middle Initial	E-mail Address		Message Phone # (include area code)
Last Name	Circle Highest Grade Completed 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 Degree Earned _____		Are You A Single Parent? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy)	Dropped out of High School? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No GED/HS Equivalency? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No High School Graduate? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		Employment Status: <input type="checkbox"/> Employed If employed, # of hours per week: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Employed w/Notice of Termination <input type="checkbox"/> Employed w/Military Separation <input type="checkbox"/> Not Employed
Gender <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	Are you currently in school? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, please indicate which type of school: <input type="checkbox"/> High School <input type="checkbox"/> Community College <input type="checkbox"/> Trade School <input type="checkbox"/> College/University		
Ethnicity <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic or Latino <input type="checkbox"/> Not Hispanic or Latino	Job Behavior Patterns (Please Circle) Punctuality; Good Attendance; Good Appearance; Follow Instructions; Get Along With Others.		Desired Employment – employment you are seeking and are qualified for: 1. Desired Employment (job title) _____ Total Months of Experience _____ Last Year Worked in this Occupation _____
Race <input type="checkbox"/> Asian <input type="checkbox"/> Black/African American <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian/Alaska Native <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander <input type="checkbox"/> White <input type="checkbox"/> Information Not Provided	Job Seeking Skills (Please Circle) Have: Resume; Job Searching Skills; Interviewing Skills; Cover Letter.		
Legally entitled to work in U.S.? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Need help with: Resume; Job Searching Skills; Interviewing Skills; Cover Letter.		2. Desired Employment (job title) _____ Total Months of Experience _____ Last Year Worked in this Occupation _____
Served Only National Guard or as Reservist? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Summary of Occupational Strengths and Weaknesses _____		
Military Service-Active Duty? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Date Entered: _____ mm/dd/yyyy Date Released: _____ mm/dd/yyyy	Valid Driver's License? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		3. Desired Employment (job title) _____ Total Months of Experience _____ Last Year Worked in this Occupation _____ Desired Salary \$ _____
Released from Active Duty with Discharge other than Dishonorable? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Service Connected Disability <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	State License Issued: _____		
VA Disability Rating _____ % Limited English Proficiency? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Need Translation Assistance? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Class: _____		Desired Job Site Locations: <input type="checkbox"/> Anywhere in the United States <input type="checkbox"/> Anywhere in Washington List the County/Countries in Washington State: _____ Youth Program Between the ages of 16 – 21 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Do you need help finding a job due to lack of education, experience? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Disabled? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Homeless / Runaway? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Offender-felony conviction? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Endorsement(s): _____		

WorkSource Washington is an equal opportunity employer and provider of employment and training services.
Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to persons with disabilities.
(Complete reverse side)

Exhibit V-3 (continued)

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY / most recent first (Additional employment history forms available)

Employer Name (most recent)		Job Title	Are you seeking this type of work? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Start Date (mm/yyyy)	End Date (mm/yyyy)	Ending Salary	Hours Worked Per Week
City, State		Country (if other than USA)	Reason for leaving
Job Description/Duties			
Employer Name		Job Title	Are you seeking this type of work? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Start Date (mm/yyyy)	End Date (mm/yyyy)	Ending Salary	Hours Worked Per Week
City, State		Country (if other than USA)	Reason for leaving
Job Description/Duties			
Employer Name		Job Title	Are you seeking this type of work? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Start Date (mm/yyyy)	End Date (mm/yyyy)	Ending Salary	Hours Worked Per Week
City, State		Country (if other than USA)	Reason for leaving
Job Description/Duties			

Employment Security Department (ESD) / Data Sharing Notice for WorkSource

The information you provide to us is private and confidential and will be shared among WorkSource partners to facilitate the delivery of services to you. Examples of WorkSource partners are community colleges, community service organizations, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation within DSHS. Each region will have some or all of these types of WorkSource partners and the partners differ in each region. The information will be shared with WorkSource partners only for the purpose of providing employment and training-related services to you.

The information we will share includes: the personal information you have provided to us, such as your name, address and Social Security Number, other relevant identifying information, and your employment and educational history. Sharing of information among WorkSource partners allows you to receive services from them without having to give the same information to each of the partners. By contract, WorkSource partners are prohibited from further disclosing this information.

You may ask us to not share your information with WorkSource partners and we will honor that request. If you ask us to not share your information with WorkSource partners, your eligibility for services will not be affected. However, in order to take advantage of services offered by other WorkSource partners, you will need to give each one of them information about yourself.

Unless you ask us to not share your information, the relevant information will be shared with our WorkSource partners, so they can assist you in employment and training-related services.

Signature _____ Date _____

Workforce Development System (CWDS). CWDS was phased in at the start of 2007 and serves as the major gateway to One-Stop Career Center services. As part of their orientation, new customers enroll in CWDS by providing their identifying information (name, address) and basic demographics. During each subsequent visit, a customer can sign in using his or her Keystone ID and password, and can access different modules on CWDS to create a resume or conduct a job search. However, Pennsylvania does not require customers to provide their SSNs at enrollment into the CWDS (SSN is an optional field). Moreover, customers could access services without going through CWDS during their subsequent visits to the resource room, and, in that case, their usage would not be captured.

The Boulder, Colorado, LWIA uses the statewide Connecting Colorado ES registration system. First-time self-service customers in Boulder are required to register in Connecting Colorado, which elicits users' identifying information (including SSN) and basic demographics. In fact, any individual who wants to search for jobs using Colorado's ES job matching system is requested to provide identifying information, including SSN, before proceeding, regardless of whether that person is conducting a job search on-site at a One-Stop Career Center or remotely.

Whether these statewide systems can reasonably be construed as comprehensively tracking on-site self-services users depends on whether first-time users are required to register in the state system as a condition of proceeding to the resource room (as in Boulder and Philadelphia), and whether SSNs must be provided as part of the registration process (required in Connecting Colorado, but not in Pennsylvania's CWDS). Even with these requirements, the statewide systems are generally better at tracking customers (i.e., who visits) than they are at capturing data about each customer's visit (e.g. timing of visit) to the resource room, unless, as in Metro South, customers must log on to the statewide system every time they visit the center, regardless of the purpose of their visits. On the other hand, an advantage of the statewide systems is their ability to track remote usage, and not just usage that occurs on-site.

Types of Information Tracked

As Exhibit V-4 shows, the tracking systems that states and LWIAs are using allow them to collect and track a wide range of data on customers, including each customer's characteristics, service usage, satisfaction, and, in two LWIAs, employment outcomes. In most cases, this information is used to guide program management decisions or satisfy local workforce investment board or state reporting requirements. The following section summarizes the various types of information that states and local areas are collecting and tracking.

**Exhibit V-4:
Types of Information Tracked**

	Alameda County	Boulder	Brazos Valley	Fulton County	Metro South	Oakland	Olympic	Oyster Bay	Philadelphia	Richmond	Riverside	Sacramento	South Plains	Trident
Identification & Contact														
Name	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mailing Address	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Phone Number	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Email Address	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Social Security Number	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Demographics/Background														
Date of Birth	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Race/Ethnicity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Education	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gender	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Language Proficiency	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Head of Household	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	
Family Income	✓	✓			✓	✓				✓	✓	✓		
Citizenship Status	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Veteran Status	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Valid Driver's License	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Barriers														
Public Assistance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Offender Status	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	
Disability Status	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Housing Status/Homeless		✓	✓		✓		✓				✓	✓	✓	
Employment History														
Employment Status	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Previous Employer/Position	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Eligible for UI	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	
Certificates/Skills	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		
Employment Objectives														
Career Interest	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Desired Salary		✓	✓				✓	✓					✓	
Shift Preferences		✓	✓				✓	✓					✓	
Location Preferences		✓	✓				✓	✓					✓	
How Heard About Us?														
	✓	✓				✓				✓				
Services														
Date/Time of Use	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Purpose/Service Desired	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓
Outcomes														
Employment							✓	✓						
Satisfaction	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

Customer Characteristics

As the exhibit makes clear, all the LWIAs attempt to track a significant amount of customer information:

- identifying information, such as name, address, and SSN
- basic demographic and background characteristics, including education, gender, race, and ethnicity
- potential barriers to employment, such as public assistance reciprocity, being an ex-offender, or having a disability
- employment history, including current employment status (usually) and (in most LWIAs) also information about previous positions held and salary

Less common, but still widespread, is the requirement that customers supply information about their employment objectives, including career interests and desired salary.

Based on this review, the list of items being tracked indeed appears impressive. Moreover, staff report that the information collected can be beneficial in making program management decisions, because it informs them if a customer may be in need of additional services from a One-Stop Career Center partner. However, in actuality, some of the customer tracking information is explicitly identified to the customer as optional at the time registration occurs. For example, Philadelphia's CWDS requires a customer to provide only his or her name, address, date of birth, citizenship status, and gender. In other LWIAs, the data extracts provided to the research team show that many of the fields have significant amounts of missing data, regardless of whether they are explicitly classified as optional or not. For example, in Sacramento, which has one of the most sophisticated tracking systems examined, at least 40 percent of self-service customers are missing information on their current employment status, educational status, household income, offender status, language proficiency, and work history, among other items. In most other LWIAs, the extent of missing data is comparable or even worse. Clearly, LWIAs place a premium on expediting the enrollment process, to ensure that their customers can access services without undue delay, and, thus, require only a bare minimum of information at baseline.

Services Used

Apart from their ability to track basic demographics and provide unique customer counts, tracking systems, especially local systems, are particularly strong in being able to identify when services were accessed. This extends to recording not only the date when initial registration occurred, but also, through the various methods described earlier in this chapter, identifying the date and time of each subsequent visit to the resource room. Such tracking provides site administrators with the ability to tally the volume of usage (e.g., overall, by center, by day of the week or time of day) and frequency of usage (e.g., how many customers are repeat users). Local

systems also typically record the reason for the customer's visit or the services he or she intends to access. The service categories used are to a large degree idiosyncratic to each LWIA, but common ones used include the following:

- *Orientation to the One-Stop/resource room*, in which staff explain the tools and resources available to customers during their initial entry
- *Interest in and/or referrals made to partners*, such as receiving information about Veterans' services, Vocational Rehabilitation, housing, youth programs, WIA, education or other training providers, and the filing of UI claims
- *Job-seeking and resource room services*, such as using the computers, fax machine, copier or telephones; preparing a resume; accessing LMI; using assistive technology; or looking up job listings
- *Group activities*, such as job clubs, employer presentations, job fairs or workshops on topics such as job readiness, job search strategies, and computer skills
- *Assessment, testing, and career guidance services*, including self-assessments, such as completing career interest inventories or taking a typing test

Outcomes and Customer Satisfaction

For most LWIAs visited for this study, tracking the employment outcomes obtained by self-service customers is uncommon. The exceptions are two of the LWIAs relying on state tracking systems. Oyster Bay, New York, is tallied in this category; but, as mentioned, since it moved to the functional alignment plan, virtually all of its resource room users become registered as both ES and WIA participants for whom tracking outcomes on the programs' required performance outcomes is mandatory. The other LWIA that reports tracking employment outcomes is Olympic, Washington, which uses a linkage between the state's SKIES system and the state's UI wage system to determine outcomes for self-service customers, at least those who are entered into SKIES.

Other LWIAs request that self-service customers contact them when they have obtained employment, and one even provides its customers with a postage-paid card for this purpose. However, in actuality, notification is extremely spotty.

LWIAs more commonly collect customer satisfaction data, consistent with results from the local-area survey described in Chapter III, which showed that 70 percent of LWIAs ask job seekers about their satisfaction with self-services. The LWIAs visited are using a variety of methods for conducting the surveys, including telephone or mail surveys of samples of customers or, more commonly, hard-copy surveys distributed to customers in the resource room.

The customer satisfaction surveys that One-Stop Career Centers conduct generally have a number of questions and statements related to the center's different levels of service (e.g.,

location, staff competencies, computers, workshops, etc.). The surveys typically use a scale system (e.g., 1–5) that asks customers to rate their overall experiences at the center and the various services received. Results from these surveys are then entered into the local area’s tracking system or an Excel spreadsheet, and each service or question asked is tallied and given a numerical rating.

The surveys typically ask self-service customers a range of questions about their visits to the resource room, with questions falling into three common categories:

- *Customer experiences.* These questions typically ask if job seekers were satisfied with the resource room’s services, if their expectations were met, if the services were ideal or relevant to their needs, if they would recommend the One-Stop Career Center to others, and if they are likely to use services in the future.
- *Customer impressions of the facilities and staff.* These questions may inquire about the facilities themselves (e.g., accessibility, cleanliness, functionality of equipment, etc.), the staff (e.g., availability, level of knowledge, helpfulness, etc.), and timeliness of services.
- *Helpfulness of specific services.* These questions often ask about self-assessments, resume assistance, job-search and job-listings tools, computer/Internet, information on training, UI information, community services, and equipment (e.g., fax machine, copier, telephones, software etc.).

In addition to these three main areas of questions, some customer satisfaction surveys also ask customers for their demographic information, such as the customer’s gender, race and ethnicity, education, and employment status. A number of satisfaction surveys also question customers about the purpose of their visits and the numbers of times they visited the center, and most also include a section that allows customers to provide written comments or recommendations.

Use of Information That is Tracked

Of the LWIAs participating in this study, seven reported sharing self-service usage information among state and local staff and partners. Staff from these seven LWIAs reported producing reports on a monthly or quarterly basis that provide self-service information (e.g., disaggregate customer characteristics, service usage, etc.) to One-Stop Career Center staff, the local workforce investment board (WIB), or partners and state staff. For instance, Sacramento reported generating quarterly reports for WIB and career center staff that provide local area and center-specific fiscal-year trends in customer counts, services, and customer visits. In addition, this report provides the percentage changes in customer numbers, visits, and services, as well as fiscal-year trends and breakdowns by age, gender, race/ethnicity, education status, and other characteristics (e.g., disabled, veteran, ex-offender, seasonal farm worker, etc.). Here, as in other LWIAs, the reports are used to make strategic decisions regarding resource allocations.

Similarly, the analysis of customer satisfaction data has been shown to be useful. In some centers, staff reported that the One-Stop Career Center manager will schedule staff meetings if the survey shows there are specific issues that need to be addressed. In one center, the center manager has reportedly met with staff members individually if customers specifically mentioned them in a survey. Elsewhere, center administrators report comparing their customer satisfaction results to those of organizations and businesses using the American Customer Satisfaction Index.⁴ By using this index, the LWIA determines its percentile ranking and areas needing improvement.

In addition to sharing self-service information among local staff, a few LWIAs in one state have the ability to directly upload self-service information from their local tracking system to the state's tracking system. For instance, Sacramento staff reported that they upload data from their tracking system to the state's Job Training Automation (JTA) system. Specifically, all customer information (demographic, eligibility, and service-related) that is entered in to the SMARTware automated case management system (the local tracking system) can be automatically uploaded to JTA by Sacramento information technology staff. This practice has alleviated double-data entry for local staff, and has allowed information to be easily shared throughout the state.

These examples clearly demonstrate the efficiency advantages of local-level tracking and the importance of analysis for system management. Other LWIAs, however, report difficulty in generating reports that they find useful and are thus making scant use of the data they have been collecting.

Cost of Tracking Systems

While customer-tracking systems are useful in allowing LWIAs to identify and report self-service users of public workforce development services, implementing and maintaining these systems can be costly. Not all LWIAs in the study were able to provide estimates of the cost of maintaining and operating their tracking systems, but a few were able to provide some useful information.

In California, Sacramento maintains the SMARTware system used by seven LWIAs throughout the state. Sacramento staff reported that the total annual cost to manage the SMARTware system is roughly \$100,000, which pays for the contract programmer and network engineer. These individuals are responsible for managing the system, which includes completing upgrades and providing technical support to local One-Stop Career Center staff.

⁴ The American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) is an indicator of customers' satisfaction with the quality of the products and services they purchase.

Other LWIAs utilizing the SMARTware system defray some of these expenses. Sacramento determines each LWIA's share based partly on the LWIA's population size and Sacramento's experience with other LWIA users. LWIAs can receive additional charges if they request that Sacramento provide a host server or tailor the SMARTware system for their specific area. Consequently, the cost that each LWIA pays to use the SMARTware system varies considerably. Exhibit V-5 shows these amounts for selected areas.

**Exhibit V-5:
California LWIA SMARTware Cost Allocation**

	Amount
Alameda County	\$68,000
Oakland	\$74,000
Riverside	\$50,000

New York's Oyster Bay was also able to provide an estimated cost for operating DataFlex, its local tracking system. This figure is \$10,000 per year. The primary cost of the system comes from developing scan cards for customers to use and making any necessary programming changes. The Workforce Partnership (TWP)⁵ contracts with a local software consultant for these services, and this individual is paid a one-time fee each year. Similarly, Trident, South Carolina, estimated the cost of its swipe-card system at about \$7,000 per year.

Conclusions

As discussed throughout this chapter, states and LWIAs are using various types of tracking systems to capture information about self-service users and usage. While many LWIAs are using their own tracking systems to capture self-service information, a number are also using statewide systems. Statewide and local tracking systems each have their own advantages and weaknesses. Statewide systems are especially convenient for creating online databases to facilitate matching between job seekers and employers and measuring participants' employment outcomes. However, because tracking the use of local self-services is not their primary function, usage data can be absent or incomplete. By contrast, local systems are generally more comprehensive in tracking usage, but reliance on them often requires additional data entry to support the registration of customers in the state ES job system and provides no ready means for measuring employment outcomes.

⁵ TWP is a consortium of local governments funded by WIA that provides services throughout the Oyster Bay area.

Regardless of the system, however, One-Stop Career Center staff mentioned a number of benefits to the systems they use, including the ones below.

- **Assist One-Stop Career Center staff in identifying customers in need of staff assistance.** When state and local tracking systems require customers to provide a range of personal information during their initial visit—particularly information about disability status, offender status, housing status, and the like—staff are better able to understand customers’ barriers to employment, identify those in need of intensive or training services, and expedite the referral to a partner agency where a partner’s services are appropriate. Also, the existence of this kind of information has led to the hiring or training of resource room staff with specialized expertise that matches the needs of resource room customers.
- **Assist One-Stop Career Center staff in managing customer flow.** Monthly and quarterly reports that state and local staff generate from their tracking systems have been beneficial in allowing them to understand customer service usage (e.g., number of customer visits, services used, etc.). This information has allowed a number of One-Stop Career Centers to schedule services and staff during times when resource room services are most used.
- **Assist the redesign of resource rooms and self-services.** A number of One-Stop Career Centers have redesigned their resource rooms or improved service tools and resources based on customer usage data and results from customer satisfaction surveys.
- **Allow the upload of information from the local tracking system to the state tracking system.** At least one LWIA has the ability to automatically upload customer information (e.g., demographics, eligibility, services received, etc.) to the state’s WIA tracking system. This is a benefit to local staff because it eliminates the need for duplicate data entry, and it provides state staff with swift and accurate information regarding self-service usage.

At the same time, a number of limitations also were apparent:

- **Tracking is time-consuming and expensive.** Tracking self-service usage can be cumbersome, and is especially burdensome during times of heavy center usage. Moreover, purchasing or leasing scanning or swipe card equipment imposes a financial cost that many LWIAs may be reluctant to bear, especially during times when funding for WIA and ES has been shrinking in real-dollar terms.
- **Customers lose swipe/scan cards.** A number of staff mentioned that customers frequently lose their cards, which then need to be replaced. This adds to the expense and burden.
- **Data entry can be spotty and error-prone.** Especially to the extent that data entry is perceived as burdensome and staff are pressed for time given their other obligations, data entry can be inaccurate or may be skipped altogether.
- **Information on service usage is inexact.** Generally, the tracking systems record the services that customers report intending to use rather than the services actually used. Furthermore, service codes are applied inconsistently across LWIAs and

often even within each LWIA. Thus, service usage data are often of questionable value.

- **Information on outcomes is virtually non-existent.** Unless the LWIA can easily link its local tracking database to a state system, or comprehensive tracking occurs on a statewide system to begin with, LWIAs have limited ability to record the employment outcomes attained by self-service users.
- **Tracking remote self-service usage is largely absent.** While local systems are successful at capturing on-site self-service usage, they are unable to capture remote usage because registration on state job-matching systems is not required for all self-service customers. Thus, the comprehensive tracking of remote services is largely nonexistent.
- **Consortium or state approval is required in order for changes to the MIS to occur.** In some cases, LWIAs are a part of a consortium of LWIAs that utilize a common local tracking system. This poses challenges for LWIAs wanting to tailor the tracking system to meet their specific needs, because no changes to the system are made unless all partners of the consortium agree. LWIAs that use a statewide tracking system are similarly constrained, in that an individual LWIA cannot readily tailor features of the statewide system to its local needs.

Clearly, the LWIAs studied as part of this project have demonstrated the practicality of comprehensive tracking and are convinced of its value, but, in light of the drawbacks mentioned, others may be reluctant to follow suit.

VI. WHO USES SELF-SERVICES?

As Chapter IV makes clear, LWIAs use varying means to make potential customers aware of One-Stop Career Center services and to make the centers themselves as easy to locate and visit as possible. As a result of these efforts, who ends up using self-services and why do they do so? This chapter addresses these questions by drawing on quantitative data from multiple sources:

- data extracts from the self-services tracking systems provided by nine LWIAs, including six in California, one in Pennsylvania, and two in Texas¹
- WIASRD data, provided by DOL, from which those who received WIA staff-assisted services in these nine LWIAs were extracted
- customer survey data from five of these LWIAs, including two in California, one in Pennsylvania, and two in Texas²
- UI wage data provided by Pennsylvania and Texas, covering self-service users in the LWIAs that submitted self-services tracking data in these states

A general description of these data sources was presented in Chapter I, as were the caveats in interpreting the data. Because the project's data come from non-representative LWIAs around the nation, this chapter adopts a case-study approach, in that findings are presented for each LWIA separately, rather than being aggregated across them.

The Characteristics of Self-Services Users

This chapter begins by profiling the demographic characteristics of self-services users. As shown in Exhibit VI-1, there is substantial variability across LWIAs, but some common patterns emerge as well.

¹ For convenience, throughout this chapter the six LWIAs in California are identified as CA-1 through CA-4, with CA-3 representing a combination of three LWIAs that submitted data jointly; the one LWIA in Pennsylvania is identified as PA-1; and the two in Texas are identified as TX-1 and TX-2. All six California LWIAs and the one in Pennsylvania are in large metropolitan areas, while the two in Texas are largely rural. See Chapter I for further details.

² As described in the Appendix, the customer survey data were weighted for nonresponse.

- The majority of self-services customers in all LWIAs can be described as middle-aged, but substantial numbers are younger and older. Indeed, 30 percent to 40 percent are younger than age 30, and about 10 percent in most LWIAs are ages 55 or older.
- The genders are remarkably balanced across all these LWIAs, with about equal numbers of male and female customers.
- The racial and ethnic composition of customers is quite variable among these LWIAs, however, as we might expect given the compositional differences of communities across the country. African-Americans predominate among self-services customers in one of the LWIAs being profiled, Hispanics in another, and whites elsewhere.
- The educational distributions also appear to be quite discrepant. Although the substantial amount of missing data on this item for self-service customers in some LWIAs means that inferences must be tentative, it appears that those with some college make up as much as 40 percent of self-service users in some LWIAs, but only about 15 percent of customers elsewhere. At the other extreme, as few as 19 percent and as many as 30 percent are high school dropouts.

Other information about the characteristics of self-services users is quite spotty, a function of the fact that LWIAs' tracking systems are idiosyncratic with respect to the items they capture. But the evidence that is available shows that veterans make up six to nine percent of users, and those with a disability make up a small but not insubstantial number. Those with no pre-program earnings (measured as the average of earnings in the second and third quarters prior to the self-services registration date) make up about 30 percent to nearly half of self-service users in the three LWIAs whose states provided UI wage data. However, these latter figures must be interpreted with caution because of the likelihood that an appreciable number of customers gave faulty Social Security Numbers at registration, thus inflating the incidence of zero earnings tabulated in this table.³

To put these numbers in context, it is useful to know how the characteristics of self-services customers as a whole compare to that portion who go on to receive WIA staff-assisted services. Chapter II described the criteria by which LWIAs winnow the pool of self-services customers to determine who receives staff-assisted services, balancing the desire to serve those most in need with a recognition that sometimes the very neediest are not likely to benefit from more intensive services. Exhibit VI-2 shows how these considerations play out, at least with respect to the LWIAs in the study's sample. In this exhibit, a plus sign (+) denotes that WIA adult

³ Both Pennsylvania and Texas conducted UI wage matches on behalf of the study team, using the SSNs for self-service users that we supplied to them.

**Exhibit VI-1:
Characteristics of Self-Services Users in Selected LWIAs**

	CA-1	CA-2	CA-3	CA-4	PA-1	TX-1	TX-2
Age							
Less than 22	14.3%	14.6%	14.2%	23.2%	10.5%	13.7%	16.3%
22 to 29	19.1	22.0	19.0	21.5	21.6	30.3	27.0
30 to 44	33.6	35.0	33.7	31.3	35.0	36.1	33.8
45 to 54	20.9	18.1	21.3	16.3	21.0	14.2	15.9
55 or older	12.1	10.4	11.9	7.8	11.9	5.7	7.0
Gender							
Female	48.2	49.7	50.0	49.8	50.7	51.1	55.8
Male	51.8	50.3	50.0	50.2	49.3	49.0	44.3
Race/Ethnicity							
American Indian	na	na	1.4	2.6	1.0	0.3	0.3
Asian/Pacific Islander	na	na	22.5	12.5	2.8	0.2	0.3
African-American	na	na	33.3	27.5	63.3	17.1	40.0
Hispanic	na	na	20.4	24.7	15.4	45.5	14.6
White	na	na	22.4	32.7	17.5	36.9	44.9
Education							
Less than HS grad	19.6	na	18.9	30.6	16.2	23.8	20.3
HS grad or equivalent	63.0	na	40.2	54.6	51.5	51.1	54.5
Some college	17.4	na	41.0	14.8	32.2	25.2	25.3
Is a Veteran	na	8.9	6.1	7.2	8.9	na	na
Has a disability	na	na	3.8	8.2	3.0	na	na
Employed at Intake							
Employed	14.2	na	na	na	na	na	na
Not employed	85.8	na	na	na	na	na	na
Is a TANF Recipient	na	na	na	na	13.4	na	na
Is a UI Claimant	na	na	na	na	36.0	na	na
Pre-Program Earnings^a							
None	na	na	na	na	47.1	31.1	28.7
\$1 to \$2,499	na	na	na	na	19.8	33.7	39.4
\$2,500 to \$4,999	na	na	na	na	13.6	19.7	19.2
\$5,000 to \$7,499	na	na	na	na	9.9	9.9	8.5
\$7,500 or more	na	na	na	na	9.7	5.6	4.3

Note: Information for self-service customers is taken from a data file provided by each LWIA, representing an extract from its tracking system for self-services users. These data cover various periods of time across the different LWIAs, ranging from May 2004 to December 2006. Each LWIA provided data for at least a twelve-month period within this interval. Missing data is prevalent for some items, so estimates can be unreliably measured. All numbers are percents.

^a Pre-program earnings is measured as the average of earnings in the second and third quarters prior to the self-services registration date. These data come from a match with UI earnings records provided by the LWIAs' respective states.

registrants⁴ are more likely than self-service customers to have the characteristic in question, a minus sign (–) denotes that WIA adult registrants are less likely to have the characteristics, and a zero (0) denotes that there is no significant difference between the two.

Across the LWIAs profiled in this fashion, a number of patterns can be seen:

- Compared to self-service customers, WIA adult registrants are often less likely to be young (less than age 22) or age 55 and above, and are often more likely to be middle-aged.
- Female self-service customers are usually much more likely to become WIA adult registrants than their male counterparts.
- There are a few differences between the two groups across race and ethnic categories, but these vary by LWIA. Overall, Hispanics are somewhat under-represented among WIA registrants in comparison to self-services users, as are whites, and Asian-Americans are somewhat over-represented, but this is not true everywhere.
- In comparison to self-service customers, WIA registrants are generally better educated. Almost uniformly, WIA adult registrants are less likely than self-service customers as a whole to be high school dropouts and are, in at least several LWIAs, more likely to have at least some college.
- Although evidence is sparse, veterans are less likely than self-service customers in general to become WIA registrants (perhaps because they enroll in Veterans' Employment programs rather than WIA), as are those with a disability (who, similarly, might be referred to Vocational Rehabilitation, rather than WIA, for staff-assisted services).
- Based on UI wage matching, it appears that those with zero pre-program earnings are less likely than self-service customers in general to become WIA registrants, though this finding could be an artifact of a relatively high number of self-service users supplying faulty SSNs.

Note that these comparisons are between self-service customers and those who use received staff-assisted services in the WIA *adult* program. Those who receive staff-assisted services in the WIA dislocated worker program tend to be older and more highly educated than those served in the adult program,⁵ so restricting the comparisons in the exhibit to WIA adult registrants tends to lessen differences in comparison to self-services users, at least along some dimensions.

⁴ In the several years after the enactment of WIA, registration in WIA was defined to consist of those who received WIA staff-assisted services. However, TEGL 17-05, issued in 2006, makes clear that even those who receive only self-services funded by WIA should be included in WIA's data system, and, in that sense, can become "registered" in WIA (though, still, only those who receive staff-assisted services are subject to WIA's performance measures). Nonetheless, in the discussion to follow, we use the term WIA registrants to refer to WIA participants who receive staff-assisted services, because these are the only ones included in the WIASRD.

⁵ Social Policy Research Associates, *PY 2006 WIASRD Data Book* (2008).

**Exhibit VI-2:
Significant Differences Between Self-Service Customers and
WIA Registrants, Across LWIAs**

	CA-1	CA-2	CA-3	CA-4	PA-1	TX-1	TX-2
Age							
Young	-	0	-	-	+	-	+
Middle-aged	+	0	+	+	0	0	0
Older	0	0	+	-	-	-	-
Gender							
Female	+	0	+	+	-	+	+
Male	-	0	-	-	+	-	-
Race/Ethnicity							
Asian/Pacific	na	na	+	+	0	0	0
African-American	na	na	0	0	+	-	+
Hispanic	na	na	-	-	-	+	0
White	na	na	0	0	-	0	-
Education							
HS dropout	-	na	-	-	-	-	-
HS graduate	-	na	0	+	+	0	+
Some college	+	na	+	0	0	+	0
Is a Veteran	na	0	-	-	-	na	na
Has a disability	na	na	+	-	-	na	na
Is employed at intake	-	na	na	na	na	na	na
Is a TANF Recipient	na	na	na	na	-	na	na
Is a UI Claimant	na	na	na	na	-	na	na
Pre-Program Earnings							
None	na	na	na	na	-	-	-
\$1 to \$2,499	na	na	na	na	+	+	+
\$2,500 to \$4,999	na	na	na	na	0	0	0
\$5,000 to \$7,499	na	na	na	na	0	0	0
\$7,500 or more	na	na	na	na	0	0	0

Note: The exhibit tabulates whether, in comparison to self-service users, WIA registrants are more likely to have the characteristic in question (+), less likely to have it (-), or neither (0). An 'na' in the cell indicates that the item is not captured in that LWIA's self-services tracking system. Differences are assessed at the .05 level, using a simple t-test (which assumes independence of the samples). Information for WIA registrants refers to those who received WIA staff-assisted services and is taken from the PY 06 WIASRD, covering those who exited from the adult program in this LWIA during a period nearly identical to the period covered by the LWIA's self-service usage data. Note that highest grade completed is only available for WIA registrants who received intensive or training services.

Results from the Customer Survey

Results from the customer survey, available in five LWIAs, provide a bit more information about the background characteristics of self-service users as well as their reasons for accessing services.

As Exhibit VI-3 shows, a substantial proportion of self-services customers are not native English speakers. This is true especially in selected California LWIAs, where a third fit this description. Also noteworthy is that appreciable numbers—about ten percent in most LWIAs—identify themselves as having a disability. Thus, the sorts of accommodations LWIAs make to facilitate access for those with special needs, as was discussed in Chapter IV, are clearly important to many.

About 80 percent of self-service users are not employed, and, conversely, about 20 percent have a job at the time they access services. Consistent with this statistic, searching for a job is by far the predominant reason customers give for accessing services, and is typically the primary reason as well. Nonetheless, many customers have additional or other goals in mind, such as learning job-search strategies, finding information about careers, and researching training opportunities. In keeping with the historical linkage between ES and UI, at least 10 percent also identify accessing UI as a reason for their visits.⁶

Since most self-service customers identified finding a job as the main reason for visiting the One-Stop Career Center, not surprisingly the vast majority of customers were actively engaged in job search when they first accessed services. In most LWIAs, well over half had first started looking for work fairly recently (within the previous one to five weeks), but many had been engaged in job search for considerably longer. Thus, from 13 percent to almost 30 percent had been looking for work for more than 10 weeks when they first accessed services.

Reasons for beginning the search for a job included having lost or quit a previous job (from 38 percent to nearly one-half), wanting to find a better job (from 10 percent to 16 percent), and returning to the workforce (10 percent to 14 percent). Appreciable numbers of customers cited other reasons, but their verbatim responses (such as “needed a job,” “had bills to pay,” “hours were being cut at existing job,” and “moved back to town and needed a job”) show that the reasons they gave typically could have easily fallen into one of the other categories.

⁶ Before the move to have UI applicants apply for benefits through state call centers, customers applied for UI at ES offices. Since many One-Stop Career Centers are former ES offices, community members still think of the centers as places to go to access UI. For historical background, see J. Salzman, K. Dickinson, R. Fedrau, and M. Lazarin, *Unemployment Insurance in the One-Stop System* (Social Policy Research Associates, 1999).

**Exhibit VI-3:
Customer Characteristics and Reasons for Accessing Services—
Results from the Customer Survey**

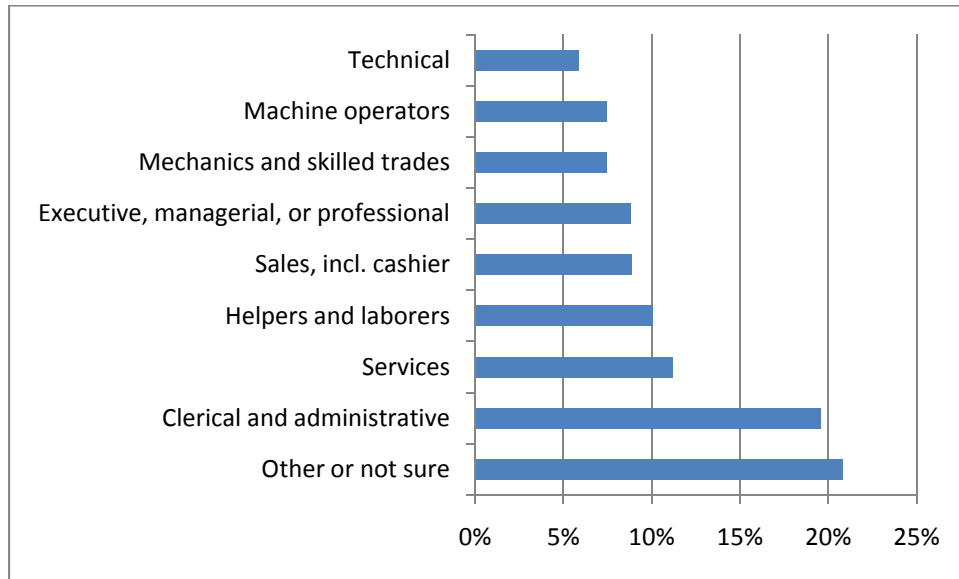
	<u>CA-2</u>	<u>CA-4</u>	<u>PA-1</u>	<u>TX-1</u>	<u>TX-2</u>
Is English your first language?					
Yes	63.5%	67.6%	88.5%	90.1%	95.0%
No	36.5	32.4	11.5	9.1	5.0
Have a disability					
No	91.3	85.0	89.2	89.9	91.0
Yes, but not a substantial barrier to employment	4.3	4.4	6.1	6.1	6.1
Yes, and a substantial barrier	4.4	10.6	4.8	4.0	2.9
Employment status at enrollment					
Employed	22.6	20.9	18.0	22.1	16.3
Not employed	77.4	79.1	82.0	77.9	83.7
Reasons for accessing services (multiple mentions allowed)					
Search for a job	86.0	79.1	82.2	83.6	87.8
Learn job search strategies	22.8	18.7	21.5	13.6	15.5
Find information on careers	23.1	36.3	25.3	22.4	18.6
Learn about training opportunities	12.1	15.9	22.9	13.9	13.3
Get Unemployment Insurance	12.5	10.6	12.4	17.5	18.6
Get training for a job	9.1	8.9	13.0	11.7	9.8
Get info on employment for those with disabilities	1.3	3.1	1.3	2.2	1.6
Other	9.6	15.1	6.0	8.7	11.9
Reasons for accessing services (main reason)					
Search for a job	82.8	79.1	78.4	83.1	87.8
Misc other reasons	17.2	20.9	21.6	16.9	12.2
Looking for work when accessed services					
Yes	93.7	84.8	88.1	87.4	92.9
No	6.3	15.2	11.9	12.6	7.1
Weeks spent looking for work when first accessed services^a					
1 to 2 weeks	28.7	19.7	21.1	39.0	41.2
3 to 5 weeks	28.3	32.1	34.3	31.6	25.3
6 to 10 weeks	23.3	20.1	27.5	15.9	15.1
11 weeks or more	19.8	28.2	17.1	13.5	18.4
Why started looking for work (multiple mentions allowed)^a					
Lost or quit previous job	37.9	40.1	45.5	45.3	48.2
Job about to end	16.0	9.7	11.5	5.2	5.1
Have a job but want a better one	15.2	16.0	12.8	12.6	10.1
Return to workforce	10.0	13.4	10.1	14.4	12.0
Other	26.8	29.4	23.2	27.3	30.6

Note: All numbers are percents. Results are from the Customer Survey, administered to self-services customers in five LWIAs in the several months after customers accessed services. See appendix for details.

^a Restricted to those who were looking for work when they first accessed services.

In contrast to the image of resource rooms attracting only customers seeking low-skilled jobs, Exhibit VI-4 suggests that appreciable numbers of customers are relatively highly skilled. Thus, although clerical, services, helper, or sales and cashier positions are the most commonly cited positions sought, about 25 percent of customers seek executive or managerial positions or jobs in skilled or semi-skilled trades.

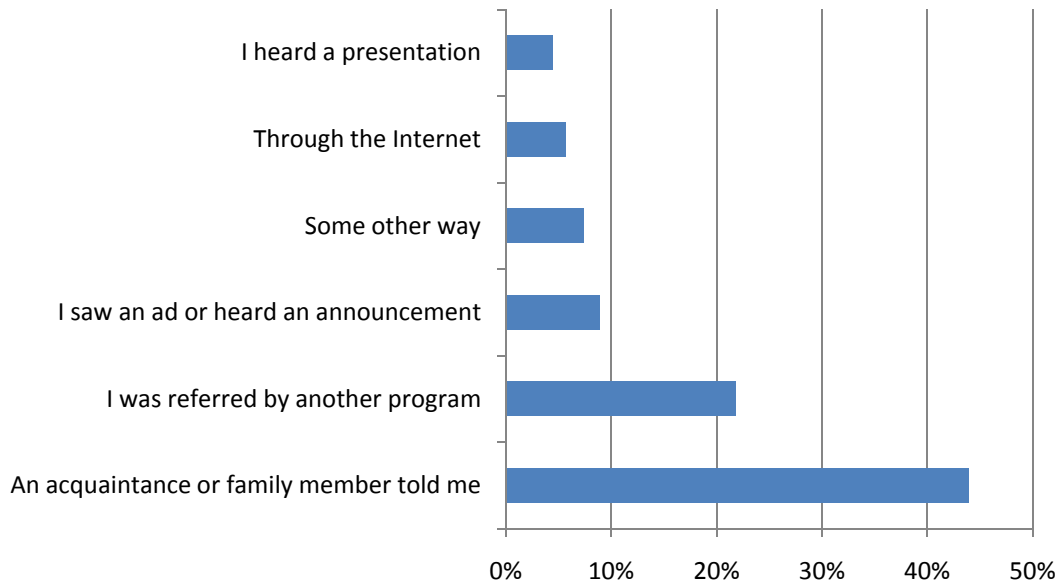
**Exhibit VI-4:
Positions that Self-Services Customers are Seeking**



Note: Results are restricted to those who were looking for a job at the time they accessed self-services and are aggregated across the LWIAs in which the customer survey was administered.

Finally, the survey asked customers how they heard about the workforce services that the center offered. The results from this question are tabulated in Exhibit VI-5, which shows that having heard about the center from an acquaintance, family member, or friend was the most common source of information, mentioned by 44 percent of customers across these five LWIAs. Having been referred by another program was the next most common response, mentioned by 22 percent of customers; by far the most common referral source given by those who wrote in a response was UI, but other mentions included Food Stamps, the parole office, and the welfare office, among others. Most other methods for becoming aware of the services were much less common; these included seeing an ad or hearing a radio or TV announcement, mentioned by 9 percent. Customers had the opportunity to write in other sources of knowledge; it was common for them to mention that they knew about the workforce services because they had used them before or that “everyone in the neighborhood knows where their office is,” a response that likely builds off the fact that many One-Stop Career Centers have a long-established presence in the communities they serve from their time in years past as ES and UI offices.

**Exhibit VI-5:
How Did you Hear About the Services**



Conclusions

Results from the tracking databases provided by selected LWIAs around the country show that self-services customers are a diverse lot. Although most are middle-aged, appreciable numbers are younger or older. Educational distributions are similarly diverse; although those with a high school degree predominate in most LWIAs, dropouts make up more than 30 percent of the customer mix in some areas, and those with some college can be as common. Furthermore, results from the customer survey show that many customers have unique needs, such as having a disability or a language barrier that may need to be accommodated. Similarly, although looking for a relatively low-skilled job may be the most common objective that customers express, others access services with reasons other than job search in mind (such as to access training or find information about careers) or are seeking work that demands a higher level of skills. Clearly, then, resource rooms must be prepared to accommodate customers with very diverse needs.

Qualitative data collected during the site visits make clear the complicated, often times conflicted decisions that LWIAs make regarding which self-service customers should advance to WIA staff-assisted services. Optimizing the use of available funds to achieve high performance is clearly an important consideration, but so too is reaching out to those who seem to be most in need of more intensive services. Because of the ways these decisions play out in the LWIAs that provided tracking-system data, those who receive WIA staff-assisted services are less likely than self-services customers as a whole to be very young or to be high school dropouts. This finding implies that those left behind in the pool of self-service users have somewhat greater barriers to employment on average.

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VII. SELF-SERVICE USAGE

Anyone who has visited a One-Stop Career Center's resource room knows that it can be a hub of activity, with customers being oriented to services, using computers to check job openings or write resumes, talking with counselors, and so on. But what more can be said about what they are doing? On how many different days do customers access services and over what span of time? What types of services do they access most commonly? How satisfied are they with the services they receive? This chapter provides answers to these and other similar questions, using data from two sources: extracts from the self-service tracking systems provided by nine LWIAs and the customer survey administered in five LWIAs. The chapter describes, in turn, the volume of self-service customers, patterns of self-service usage, the services used, and customer satisfaction with those services. Consistent with the case-study approach of this report, results from the tracking system data are presented independently for each LWIA, using the naming convention introduced in the preceding chapter. However, to present the results from the customer survey, data are aggregated across LWIAs, partly because small cell sizes on some items make LWIA-specific estimates unreliable, but also to protect the identity of LWIAs when presenting results that could be construed as sensitive or confidential.¹

The Volume of Self-Service Customers

This section begins the investigation of usage by describing the volume of self-service customers in each LWIA that contributed data and shows how customer volume varies over the months of a calendar year.

Overall Numbers Being Served

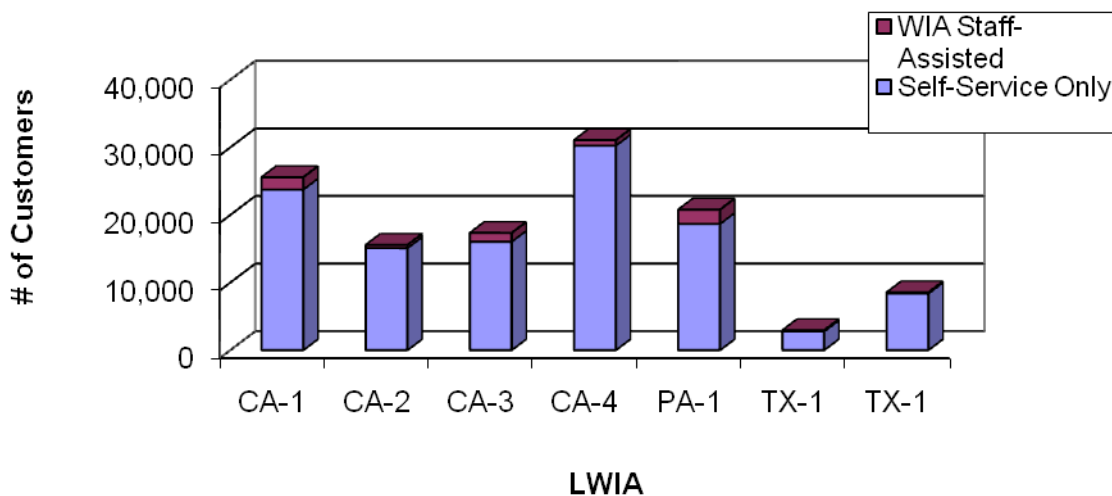
The tabulations presented in the preceding chapter suggest some interesting differences between self-service customers in general and those who receive WIA staff-assisted services. But how

¹ In fact, variance across LWIAs in the results from the customer survey is quite modest; i.e., most findings on service usage and satisfaction with services drawn from the customer survey are very consistent across LWIAs.

big are the relative sizes of these two groups? Put differently, how many of those who access self-services at a physical location go on to become users of WIA staff-assisted services at that same LWIA? The data focused on in this chapter provide a means for providing an estimate.

Self-service usage files provided by the study’s sample of LWIAs do not identify which self-service customers also accessed staff-assisted services, so this ratio cannot be calculated directly. However, a reasonable proxy can be calculated as the number of *new* self-services customers during a specified time period in comparison to the number of WIA exiters during a similar period. Assuming the inflow into WIA (i.e., the number of new WIA staff-assisted customers) approximately equals the outflow (i.e., the number of WIA exiters)—a reasonable assumption for programs neither expanding nor contracting—the number of new self-service users compared with the number of WIA exiters should provide a reasonably accurate estimate of the ratio needed. Exhibit VII-1 presents these results.

Exhibit VII-1: Self-Service and WIA Staff-Assisted Customers in Selected LWIAs



As is evident, the number of customers who only receive self-services is far greater than the number who go on to receive staff-assisted services.² In fact, in none of the LWIAs that provided data is the ratio of the former to the latter less than 8:1, and in some LWIAs the ratio is

² The exhibit shows the number of WIA exiters during a 12-month period, as calculated from the PY 05 WIASRD. The number of self-service-only customers is estimated as the number of new self-service customers during a 12-month period minus the number of WIA exiters. In general, all figures are measured for the 12 months from April 1, 2005 to March 31, 2006, but somewhat different timeframes are used for some of the LWIAs, due to limitations of data availability.

as high as 50:1. Clearly, then, from the standpoint of sheer volume, self-service customers predominate by far. If one assumes that self-service remote users make up another appreciable part of the One-Stop delivery system customer base, then the disparity between self-service customers and those who receive WIA staff-assistance becomes even more marked.

Annual Variations in Self-Service Customer Volume

At most sites, the volume of on-site self-service usage is large but also uneven across a twelve-month period, potentially posing serious resource management challenges for One-Stop Career Centers. Exhibit VII-2 shows this unevenness of use by tabulating person-days of usage by month.³ Although each LWIA has its own peculiarities, in general person-days of usage are flat during the first half of the calendar year, fall slightly in September, rebound a bit in the fall, and drop again by the end of the year.

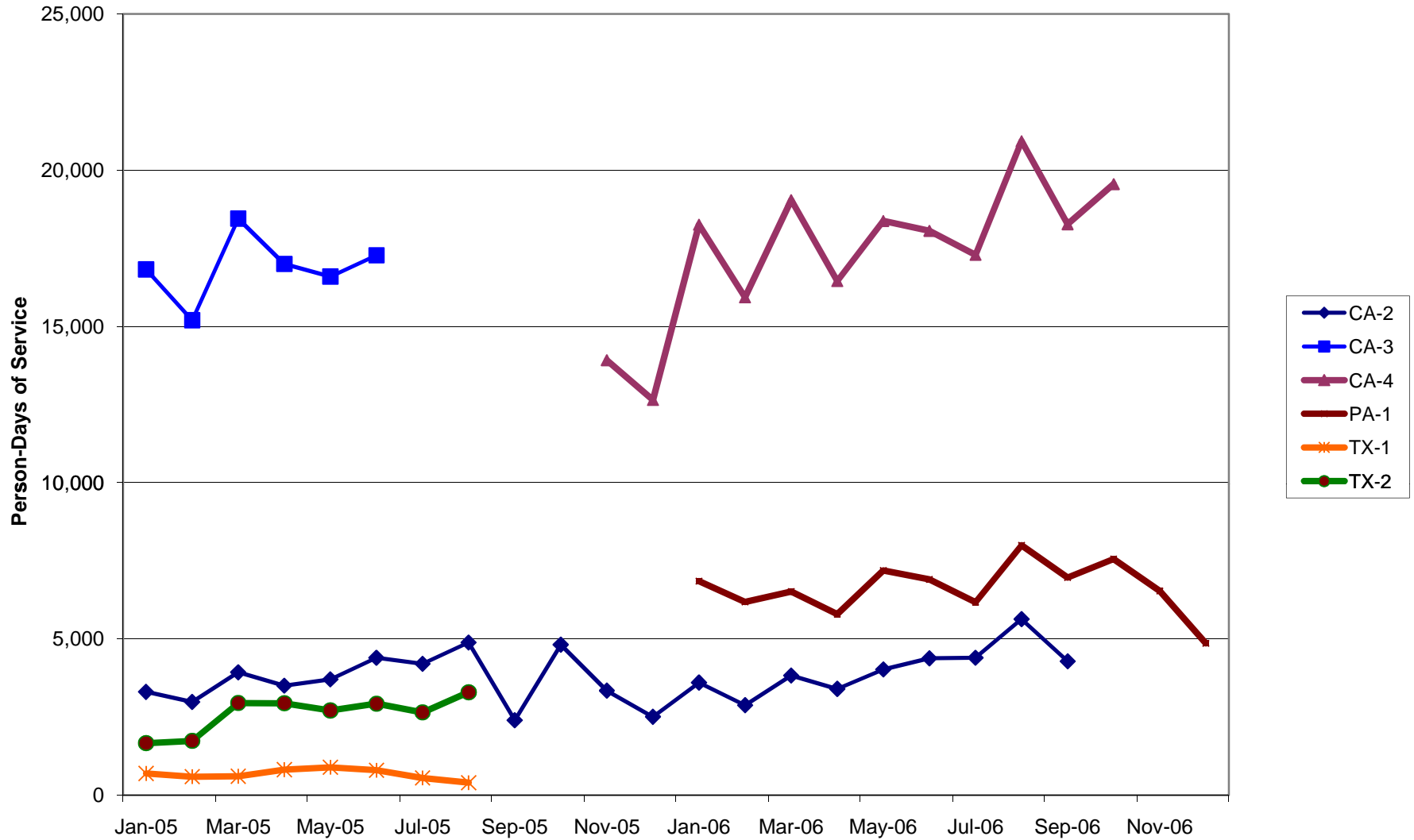
Frequency of Use

Regardless of these ups and downs over the course of a year, the volume of self-service usage during a month is considerable in most of these LWIAs. For this reason, it may be helpful for LWIAs to be aware of how customers vary in their frequency of service use, since repeat users may put different demands on the system than one-time users. Using the data that LWIAs provided on each day of use for each person for a consecutive 12-month period, the number of separate days of use per person can be counted. Exhibit VII-3 reports these results and suggests that, at least in these LWIAs, one-time users predominate.⁴ On average about 55 percent of customers visited the One-Stop Career Center only once during this year-long period, with the

³ Specifically, each person counts for as many days as he or she used self-services during the month. Different months of data are available for the different LWIAs. Service data are not available at all for CA-1.

⁴ For each of these LWIAs, daily usage data for 12 consecutive months were obtained, typically from October 2005 to September 2006. Results shown represent the percentage of customers who accessed services just once during the period, or two, three, or more times. Arguably, the beginning of this 12-month period represents the end of a spell of participation for some participants, and the end of this period represents the beginning of a spell of participation for others, so the number of repeat visits for both would be undercounted. As a sensitivity test, this tabulation was repeated after restricting the analysis to those whose first activity date was within months two through eight of the 12-month period. Doing so reduced the percentage of one-time users by only two or three percentage points.

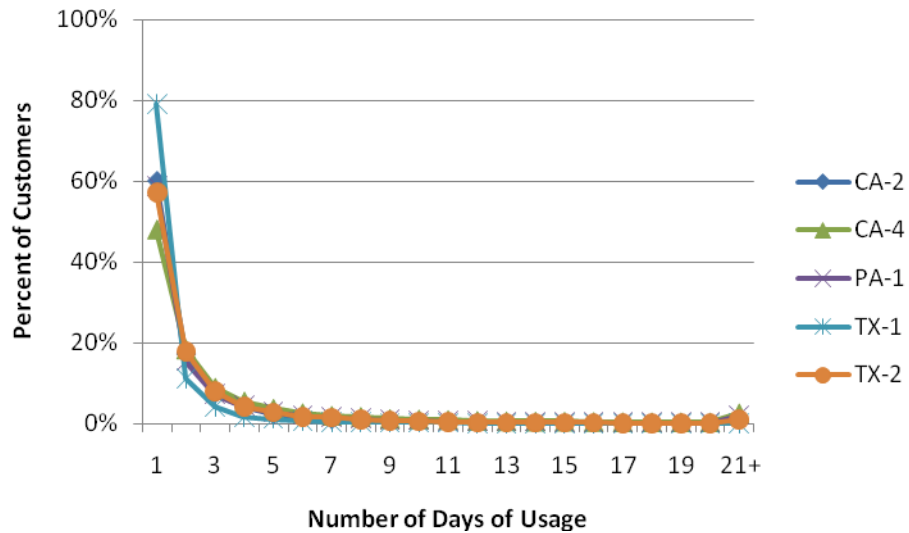
Exhibit VII-2: Person-Days of Service, by Month, for Selected LWIAs



Note: Each self-service customer counts as many times as the number of separate days they used self-services during the month. Thus, these represent person-days of usage.

figure as low as 45 percent in one LWIA and as high as 79 percent in another. Two-time users made up another 16 percent on average, and three-time users made up 7 percent.⁵

Exhibit VII-3: Customers' Days of Usage During a 12-Month Period, by LWIA



Presumably, some customers visit only once or a few times because those visits satisfy their need for services. For example, they might in a visit or two get an important job lead, receive a referral to other services, or satisfy requirements for meeting with a case manager as a condition of UI eligibility. By contrast, others might visit only once because an unfavorable experience causes them to conclude that further visits are not worth the time and effort. Still others might satisfy their need for more help by using self-service tools and resources remotely after an initial visit orienting them to the center's services.

However, although infrequent use predominates, at the other extreme, about 13 percent of customers use services more than five times in the year, and a small number of customers use services much more frequently than that, with a few percent in each LWIA accessing services 21 or more times during the year.

⁵ Frequency of use can also be calculated from the customer survey, and this source gives a somewhat different impression, with only 37 percent of respondents reporting that they visited the center only once or could not remember going at all. This discrepancy suggests that respondents to the customer survey tend disproportionately to be more frequent users.

The result is that a relatively small number of customers can account for a significant proportion of a resource room’s customer traffic. For example, as Exhibit VII-4 shows, about six percent of all customers use services eleven or more times in a year, but they account for nearly 40 percent of all person-days of usage. At the other extreme, one-time customers (54 percent of the total) account for just 17 percent of all person-days.⁶

**Exhibit VII-4:
Percent of Customers and Person-Days,
by Days of Usage in a Year**

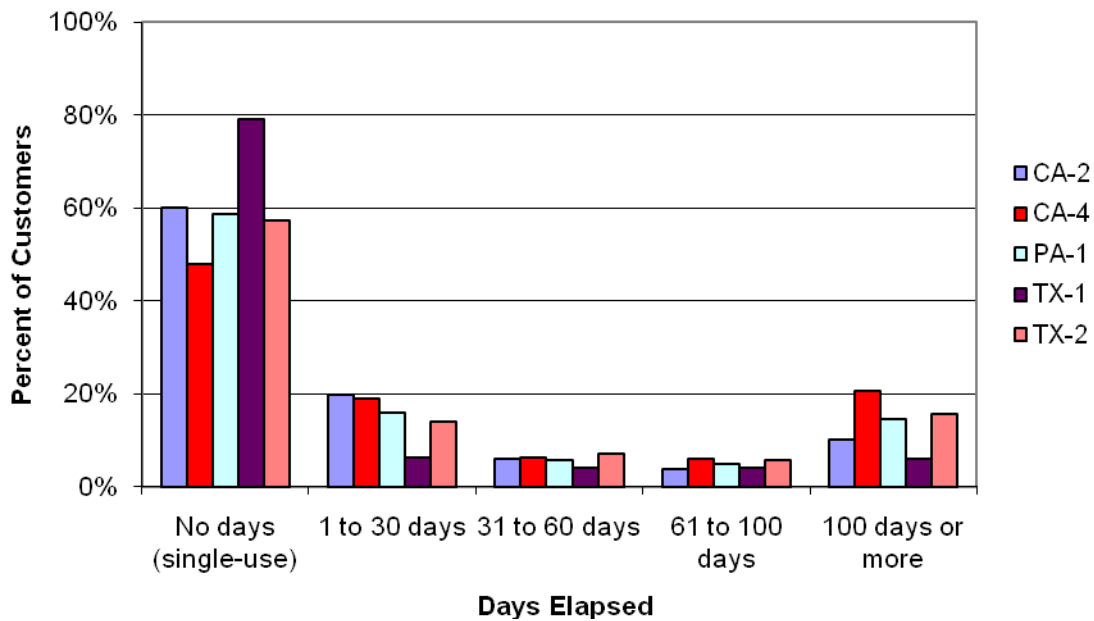
	<u>Percent of Customers</u>	<u>Percent of Person- Days of Usage</u>
Used services:		
Just once in a year	54.2%	16.7%
2-5 times in a year	33.1	28.7
6-10 times in a year	6.9	16.1
11-20 times in a year	3.7	16.6
21 times or more	2.0	22.0

Patterns of Usage

As a way of learning more about customers’ patterns of usage, the time elapsed between first and last use was calculated. These results are tabulated in Exhibit VII-5 and show that time elapsed can be considerable. As this exhibit shows—and as already described, above—appreciable numbers of customers use services only once, so for them there is no time elapsed. Many others use services a few times but over a relatively short (e.g., one-month) period. At the other extreme, the time elapsed between first and last use exceeds 100 days for about 13 percent of all users. Some of those in this latter group use services only a few times (with a long time lag between use), while others use services very often over a long period of time.

⁶ Total person-days of usage is calculated as the sum of the number of customers multiplied by each customer’s days of usage in a 12-month period. The exhibit represents the sum across all the LWIAs contributing applicable data.

Exhibit VII-5: Days Elapsed between First and Last Use



Types of Services Used

As part of their tracking systems, several of the LWIAs being profiled record the services each customer uses (or, at least, the services the customer intends to use) during each visit.

Information on service usage was also collected as part of the customer survey. Both of these data sources are used in this section to profile which services are used and with what frequency.

Results from the Tracking Systems

Each LWIA uses its own set of codes, in some cases representing hundreds of separate service activities, though usually a much smaller number of codes accounts for the vast bulk of all activity. In an effort to impose some coding uniformity across these LWIAs, their codes were classified into a manageable number of categories. Although it is not always clear where to place certain activities (some straddle the boundary between categories, for example), this categorization gives a general sense of the types of activities in which most self-service customers engage. The following list describes the categories and the types of activities included in each one:

- *Orientation to Rapid Response Services.* These codes represent activities that provide an orientation to One-Stop self-services and/or enrollment into the data system. The following are among the various specific activities included in this

category (using actual codes from the LWIAs' tracking systems): "orientation to center services," "tour center," "orientation in Spanish," "group orientation," "one-on-one orientation," and "new application."

- *Orientation to Other Services.* These activity codes represent explanations of, referrals to, or help with enrollment in other programs, including those of One-Stop Career Center partners (such as UI) or education and training providers. Specific activities included are the following: "WIA enrollment orientation," "UC registration," "adult literacy information," "information on training providers," "program performance information," "domestic violence," "clothes closet," "referral—mental health services," "referral—transportation," and so on.
- *Job Assistance.* This broad category, which predominates nearly everywhere, encompasses a range of separate activity codes, including "job search assistance," "labor market information," "resume assistance," "job fair," "internet job search," "create/modify resume," "CalJOBS," "review job posting," and similar entries.
- *Assessment and Guidance.* Part of the power of self-services is that customers can take the initiative in assessing their skills and interests and use the information that results to make career choices, sometimes with a modicum of staff assistance. This category captures these activities, which include "assessment, computer," "self assessment," "staff assessment," "reading-math testing," "career guidance," "typing test," "identify employment barriers," "identify skills," and "career assessment," among others.
- *Workshops.* Most of the activities described above are generally carried out by customers working individually. But group activities, such as workshops and job clubs, are also a big part of self-service offerings in many LWIAs, as Chapter VIII will describe. Thus, included under this category are "Spanish Job Search Workshop," "Jump Start Your Job Search," "Resume Workshop," "Acing the Interview," "Computer Basics 101," "Dress for Success," "Learn how Money Works," "Career Decision Making Workshop," "Transferable Skills Workshop," "Work Readiness Workshop," and many others. As is apparent, many of these workshops focus on assisting customers with carrying out a successful job search, but others cover topics not directly related to employment, including financial literacy and basic computer applications.
- *Miscellaneous and Unspecified Activities.* A final category encompasses activity codes that represent unspecified self-service activity (such as "core services," "counselor appointment," "faxing/copying," or "used resource room") or something that is otherwise hard to classify.

Using this scheme, the tens of thousands of service activities that individual self-service customers received in each LWIA during a 12-month period were classified. Exhibit VII-6 gives a sense of the sheer volume of activities that are captured by these LWIAs. Before classification in the broad categories defined above, overall about 776,000 service activities were recorded for 112,000 customers, for an average of about seven services per customer. Because, as was noted earlier in this chapter, most customers access services on only a few separate days at most, the

substantial volume of services derives from two factors: (a) the large number of self-service customers that these LWIAs accommodate in a year, and (b) the fact that many customers are recorded as accessing multiple services during each visit.

**Exhibit VII-6:
Volume of Self-Services and Services per Person
in a 12-month Period, in Selected LWIAs**

	Number of Self-Service Customers	Number of Services they Accessed	Services per Person	Service Categories per Person
CA-2	18,469	221,815	12.01	2.96
CA-4	55,611	292,319	5.26	1.60
PA-1	23,811	223,976	9.41	2.69
TX-1	4,567	9,619	2.11	1.34
TX-2	10,224	28,890	2.83	1.13
TOTAL	112,682	776,619	6.89	2.00

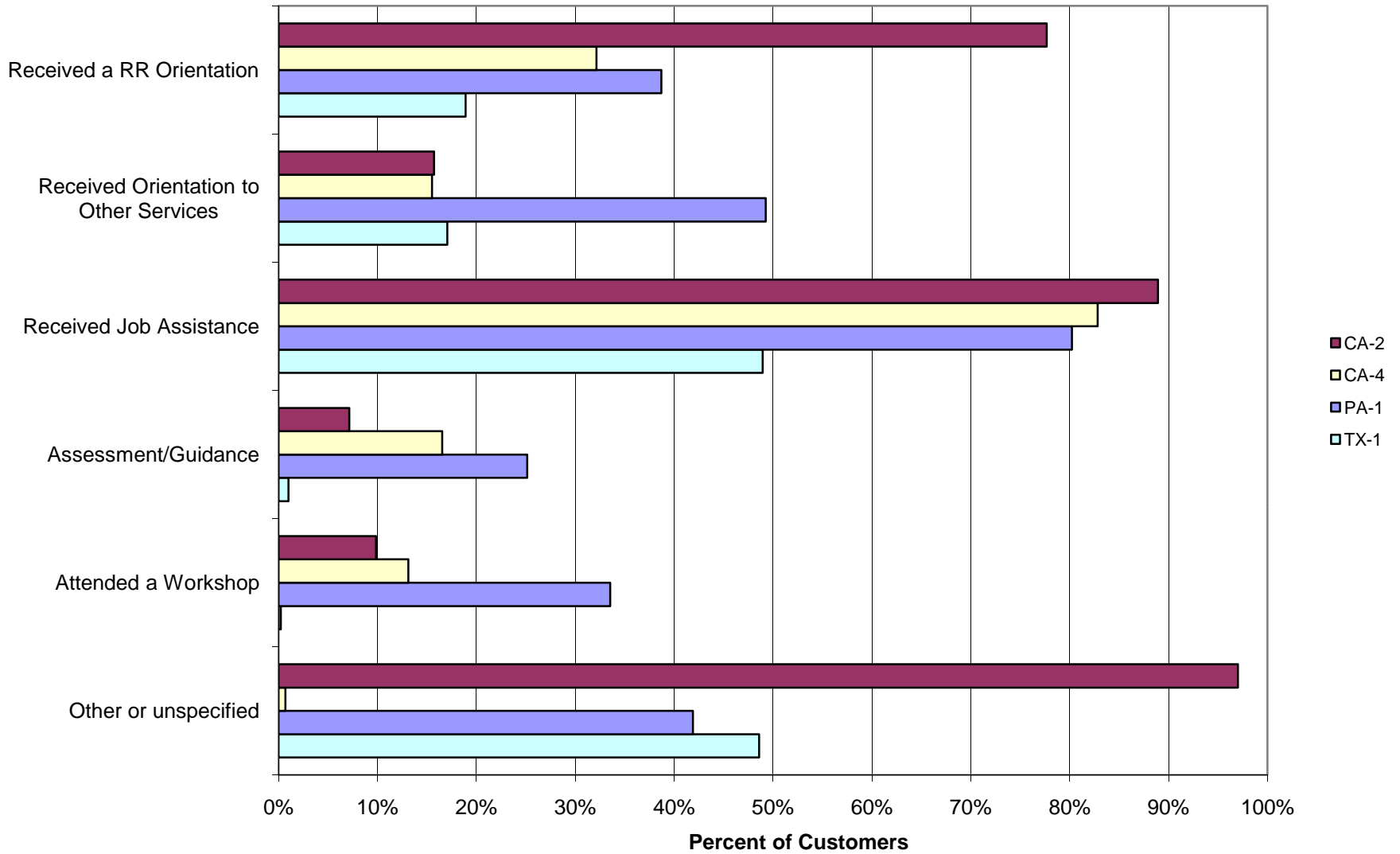
Note: Only these LWIAs provided data that could be used for this tabulation.

As a comparison of the two columns on the right side of the exhibit reveals, however, many of the multiple services that a customer receives are within the same broad category. In terms of an overall average, the seven services the average customer accesses during a year fall within an average of just two separate service categories.

Of course, the number of services recorded for each individual, as well as the number of categories in which they fall, depend largely on the details of each LWIA’s tracking system, such as what coding categories it uses and how narrowly it defines service activities. For example, in one LWIA a person’s visit to a resource room could be coded as “core services” (one service in one category), while in another LWIA that same type of visit could result in coding showing the accessing of multiple services, such as “job search assistance,” “resume assistance,” “self assessment,” and “fax/copier” (four services in three categories).

With that limitation in mind, Exhibit VII-7 shows the types of service categories that customers most often use in these LWIAs. This exhibit makes the variability in how LWIAs classify activities very apparent. One LWIA (CA-2) makes frequent use of the miscellaneous category, even for customers who received other specific services. This LWIA also appears to be more

Exhibit VII-7: Types of Services Used by Self-Service Customers



diligent in recording the resource-room orientations that occur—based on the qualitative findings to be presented later in this report, most customers appear to receive at least a basic orientation to the resource room, so the fact that only a minority are coded as having received one, except in CA-2, suggests more about the variability of coding than anything else.

Notwithstanding the fact that coding is neither consistent nor comprehensive across LWIAs, it is apparent from the exhibit that almost everywhere job search assistance predominates.⁷ Other activities are also frequently recorded—receiving an orientation to other services, assessment and guidance, and workshops—but they do not occur on the scale of job search assistance.

Results from the Customer Survey

The customer survey provides a separate source of information about customers' usage of services and, additionally, their rating of the helpfulness of the services they used. These results are tabulated in Exhibit VII-8.

Consistent with findings reported in Chapter VI regarding the reasons customers access One-Stop Career Center services, overwhelming majorities of self-service users report that they used resource rooms to look for a job (79 percent) or access related services associated with job search, such as learning job search techniques (49 percent), posting a resume (47 percent), developing a resume (35 percent), or learning how to interview for a job (25 percent). But appreciable numbers have broader aims as well, such as researching career options (38 percent), researching training providers (29 percent), or conducting a self-assessment of career interests (17 percent). Thus, in keeping with the effort of One-Stop Career Centers to develop a broad range of tools useful for furthering career development, customers have accessed a wide range of the centers' resources.

Ratings of the helpfulness of the services accessed are mixed. On the one hand, nearly all services are rated as quite or very helpful by at least half of the customers who accessed them. Furthermore, some services are rated favorably by as many as two-thirds of all users. On the other hand, appreciable percentages find the services at best only somewhat helpful. Furthermore, the services rated most favorably tend to be the ones used by the fewest customers. Thus, getting help with preparing a resume had the highest favorability rating, with 69 percent of customers who accessed this service rating it as quite or very helpful, but only 35 percent of customers used this service. Similarly, 66 percent of those who accessed a service focused on improving their basic skills rated the service favorably, but only 10 percent of customers used

this service. At the other extreme, looking for current job openings—the service used by the most customers (79 percent)—had the lowest helpfulness rating, with only 41 percent of users rating it quite or very helpful.

**Exhibit VII-8:
Services Used and Helpfulness of Services**

	Pct Using Service	Helpfulness Rating from Those Using Service			
		Not at all helpful	Somewhat helpful	Quite helpful	Very helpful
Look for job openings	79.0	17.8	40.7	26.2	15.4
Learn job search tips	49.1	9.5	37.6	33.2	19.7
Post resume	46.7	21.2	32.8	24.0	22.1
Research employers	41.6	10.2	36.7	33.1	19.9
Research career options	38.4	13.2	39.0	30.8	17.1
Help to file a UI claim	37.9	20.0	20.5	28.3	31.3
Learn about other services	35.8	10.5	33.1	35.6	20.9
Help with resume	34.5	5.9	25.0	35.4	33.8
Research jobs likely to grow	33.9	8.7	37.3	31.1	23.0
Research training providers	28.9	13.6	34.6	29.9	22.0
Learn how much jobs pay	27.1	8.5	35.7	35.9	20.0
Learn how to interview	25.3	7.9	29.5	33.9	28.7
Info on student financial aid	17.3	19.6	26.0	28.4	26.0
Assess career interests	17.0	13.4	30.9	33.3	22.4
Improve occ skills	16.9	8.2	27.1	37.7	27.1
Assess basic skills	12.8	16.0	31.5	29.3	23.2
Improve basic skills	9.5	9.0	24.8	35.3	30.8

Note: All numbers are percents. Ratings of helpfulness are restricted to those who accessed the service in question. Results are from the customer survey administered to self-services customers in five LWIAs in the several months after customers accessed services.

The survey also asked customers if there were other services they would have liked to have used but which were not offered. About 18 percent of respondents answered in the affirmative. Those who answered this way gave a variety of responses for what they felt was lacking. One of the most common additional services that customers would have liked, mentioned by about 35

⁷ And where it does not, as in TX-1, it might be because the miscellaneous category was so often used instead.

percent of those who gave an answer, was training. A few of them mentioned that they wanted training in a specific field (e.g., truck driving, nursing, the computer field), but most expressed a general interest in undertaking training to upgrade their job skills. Some mentioned that they had heard that WIA funded training, and they wondered why it was not offered to them.

Another common category represents those who found some element of the services they had received to be lacking. For example, about 13 percent of those who provided a response mentioned that they would have liked greater staff assistance. As one respondent put it, “Talking to real people would have been a plus; pointing at a computer ... is rather off-putting.” Another felt that he could have gotten a job more quickly “if someone would have worked with me.” Another 23 percent complained about other elements of the services they received, mentioning such problems as long waits to use a computer or not really being sure what services were available or how to use them.

Others—about ten percent of those who gave an answer—mentioned that they would have liked services geared specifically to people like them, such as seniors, those seeking higher-skilled jobs, or ex-offenders. Another seven percent mentioned some specific service that was lacking, such as child care, housing assistance, entrepreneurship training, or direct access to apply for UI. Finally, about ten percent mentioned, simply, that they wanted more help in finding a job.

Although the list of additional services desired is broad, these responses come only from the 18 percent of survey respondents who mentioned that they would have liked to have used an additional service that they were not offered, and thus they represent the perspective of a minority.

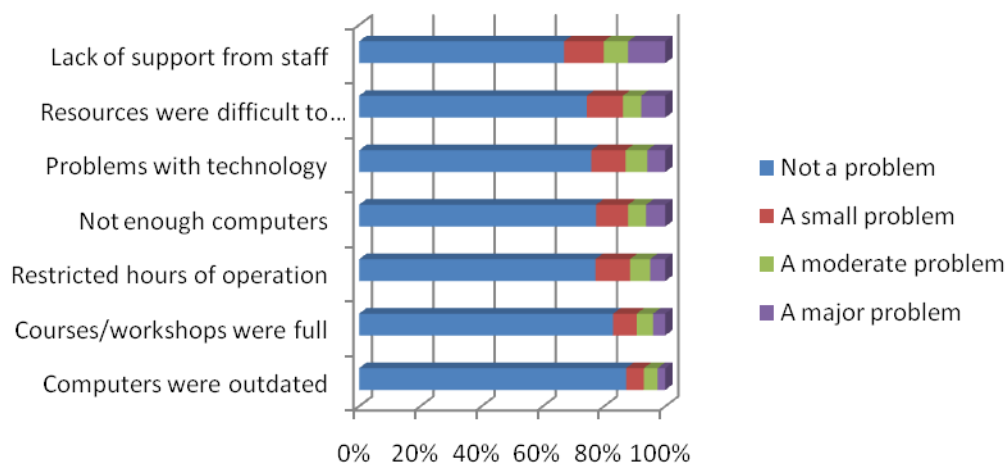
Accessibility in Using Services

Based on qualitative site-visit data, Chapter IV described the efforts that One-Stop Career Centers are making to promote accessibility. The customer survey casts additional light on this issue. Specifically, data from the customer survey show how customers in general and customers with disabilities perceived the accessibility of the services they used.

General Accessibility Issues

The survey asked customers if they thought specific aspects of resource room operations were impediments to their use of services. Exhibit VII-9 tabulates the results from this question, and these results suggest that the efforts that centers are making to facilitate access are, on the whole, successful.

**Exhibit VII-9:
Customer Ratings of Problems in Using Services**



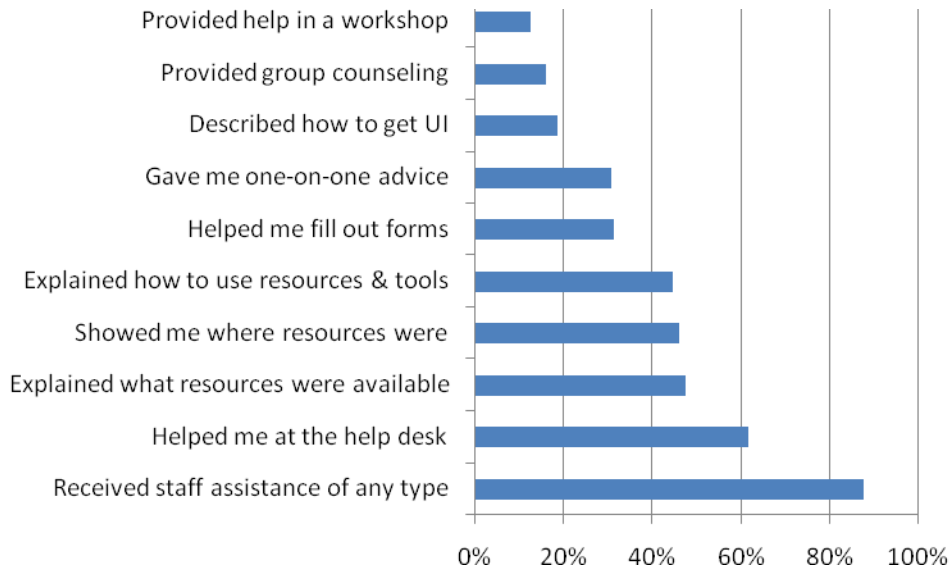
For example, only small percentages of customers—about 10 percent to 15 percent—expressed the view that moderate or major problems with technology, lack of computers, or restricted center hours impaired their usage of services. The most troublesome aspect of service delivery, though cited as a significant problem by only 20 percent, was the lack of support from staff.

Receiving inadequate staff assistance is cited as a problem by some despite the fact that 88 percent of customers received staff help in some way. Exhibit VII-10 shows that, most commonly, this help took the form of assistance provided at the help desk (cited by 62 percent), but also common were having staff explain what self-service tools were available (48 percent), where they could be accessed (46 percent), or how they could be used (45 percent).

Accessibility for Customers with Disabilities

Accommodating customers with disabilities has been a critical goal of the public workforce investment system and is one supported by federal legislation and statute. For example, Section 188 of WIA imposes the requirement that programs and activities offered as part of the One-Stop delivery system must be made accessible to persons with disabilities. Further, as noted earlier in this report, DOL has made a number of resources, such as the Disability Program Navigator, available to One-Stop Career Centers to help them serve customers with disabilities more effectively. What do the results from the customer survey tell us about how those with disabilities assess these efforts?

**Exhibit VII-10:
Types of Staff Assistance Received**



This investigation is hampered by, first, the small number of LWIAs for which we have survey data, and, second, by the fact that few customers who were surveyed in these LWIAs self-report that they have a disability.⁸ As shown in Exhibit IV-11, only 77 of the 1,457 customers who answered this question reported having a disability that constitutes a substantial barrier to employment, with another 105 having a disability that is not a substantial barrier.

**Exhibit VII-11:
Number and Percent of Survey Respondents with a Disability**

	<u>N of cases</u>	<u>Percent</u>
No, does not have a disability	1,457	88.9
Yes, but this condition is not a substantial barrier to employment	105	6.4
Yes, and this condition is a substantial barrier to employment	77	4.7

⁸ The survey asked “Do you have a long-lasting physical, mental, or emotional condition that creates difficulty in: (a) remembering or concentrating, (b) dressing, bathing, or getting around inside the home, (c) going outside the home alone to run errands, (d) seeing or hearing, (e) working at a job?” The question’s wording was suggested by DOL’s Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP).

These limitations notwithstanding, in general the results indicate that the One-Stop Career Center resource rooms accommodate these customers quite well. As Exhibit II-12 shows, overwhelming majorities of customers with a disability—even those whose disability is a substantial barrier to employment—report that they did not experience problems in accessing the centers’ services and that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the accommodations provided.

**Exhibit VII-12:
Problems in Accessing Services for Customers with a Disability**

	<u>Those for whom Disability is Not a Substantial Barrier</u>	<u>Those for whom Disability is a Substantial Barrier</u>
Was accommodating your disability a problem when you accessed services?		
Not a problem	84.0%	79.7%
A small problem	7.4	6.8
A moderate problem	1.2	5.1
A major problem	7.4	8.5
How satisfied were you with the center’s ability to provide appropriate accommodations?		
Very satisfied	25.4	27.8
Satisfied	50.8	40.7
Unsatisfied	7.5	18.5
Very unsatisfied	16.4	13.0

Note: Tabulation is restricted to customers who reported that they had a disability.

Conclusion

This chapter makes clear that a vast volume of customers use One-Stop Career Center self-services at physical locations in the LWIAs being profiled, swamping those who receive WIA staff-assisted services. Indeed, in some LWIAs, the number of customers who become new users of self-services is 50 or more times greater than the number who exit from WIA after having received staff-assisted services. Apart from sheer volume, marked seasonal variation in customer flows would seem to pose some difficulty for LWIAs from the standpoint of resource management.

This chapter also shows that the vast majority of customers use self-services at a physical location just once or a few times during the year, while, at the other extreme, a small number of

customers are extremely heavy users, recording 21 or more separate days of usage during a 12-month period. This very small group of heavy users accounts for a considerable proportion of all person-days of usage.

With regard to patterns of usage, the time elapsed between first and last use of services during a 12-month period can be considerable. Obviously, very frequent users show a long interval between first and last usage, but even many infrequent users use services once and then not again for many months.

Although the categories used by these LWIAs to characterize what customers were doing during their visit to the resource room are often times very broad (e.g. “used core services”), it seems clear that use of job search services predominates. Thus, in most of the study’s LWIAs with data of this type, about 80 percent of all self-service customers accessed job search services, such as reviewing job listings, accessing resume writing assistance, attending job fairs, and the like. Other common services include receiving a referral or orientation to other programs, such as to WIA, Unemployment Insurance, mental health services, drug counseling, and the like; obtaining career advice, either through online assessment instruments or with a modicum of staff assistance; and attending workshops on a variety of topics related to life skills or getting and keeping a job. However, the crudeness with which services are characterized in some LWIAs and the inconsistency in the way services are recorded across them makes comparisons difficult.

The preponderance of resource room activities focused on job search is evident as well from the customer survey. According to these results, 79 percent of customers visited the center to look for jobs, and appreciable numbers as well were aiming to improve their job search techniques through such activities as learning job search tips (49 percent) or getting help with preparing a resume (35 percent). But, reflecting the diversity of tools and resources that resource rooms offer, others had broader goals in mind, such as researching career options (38 percent), researching training providers (29 percent), or assessing career interests (17 percent). In general, customers are satisfied with the services they received, with majorities rating them as quite or very helpful. However, looking for a job, the service used by the greatest proportion of customers (79 percent), had the lowest helpfulness rating, with only 42 percent rating it as quite or very helpful.

Difficulties with accessing services seem not to be a cause of the mixed helpfulness rating. In fact, customers generally report that the centers’ hours of operation were appropriate to their needs, computers were adequate, and resources were not too difficult to use. Even customers with disabilities reported few problems with access.

Overall, these results demonstrate the considerable potential of the self-service One-Stop system to reach large numbers of customers and to facilitate their access to an array of services. Clearly, America's workforce is taking advantage of the opportunity that resource rooms offer, though the effectiveness of the services they access remains unclear.

VIII. STAFF ASSISTANCE WITH SELF SERVICES

Previous chapters have reported two important findings about staff assistance of self-service customers in One-Stop Career Center resource rooms: (1) most customers report that they received some help from resource room staff, and (2) most staff feel that many customers need this assistance to use self-services effectively. The present chapter examines this staff assistance in greater detail. It covers the role that various One-Stop Career Center partners play in providing staffing for self-services, the specifics of how job-seeker customers are assisted in the resource room, the referral of customers to partners that can provide additional services, and the training that resource room staff receive to help them perform their jobs more effectively.

Because One-Stop Career Centers are locally organized and managed, the staffing of the resource rooms varies not only by local workforce investment area, but also by center.

Consequently, the unit of analysis in this chapter is the individual One-Stop Career Center.

Twenty-five of these centers were visited as part of the round-two site visits. These centers are identified in Exhibit VIII-1.

**Exhibit VIII-1:
One-Stop Career Centers Visited for this Study**

State	LWIA	One-Stop Career Centers
California	Alameda County	Berkeley (North Cities); Fremont (Tri-Cities)
California	Oakland	Downtown Oakland; East Oakland
California	Richmond	Richmond
California	Riverside	Hemet; Riverside County
California	Sacramento	Franklin; Hillsdale
Colorado	Boulder	Boulder; Longmont
Georgia	Fulton County	North Fulton County
Massachusetts	Metro South	Norwood; Marlborough
New York	Oyster Bay	Massapequa; Hicksville
Pennsylvania	Philadelphia	North Philadelphia; Northwest Philadelphia
South Carolina	Trident	Trident
Texas	Brazos Valley	Brazos County; Washington County (satellite)
Texas	South Plains	Lubbock; Plain View
Washington	Olympic	Clallam County; Kitsap County

Staffing the Resource Room

This section of the chapter explores how each center allocated staff to assist customers with self-services. Topics include the number of staff assigned to work in the resource room, the status of these staff members (dedicated, rotating, part-time, or on-call), and the sources of funding used to support them.

Number of Staff Serving Self-Service Job Seeker Customers

As Exhibit VIII-2 shows, 17 centers reported having a minimum of one or two staff working in the resource room at all times. In 13 of these centers, at least one of these staff people worked in the resource room on a full-time basis, usually serving as the person who staffed the help desk. In three centers, one of the dedicated, full-time staff people assigned to the resource room was a security guard.

**Exhibit VIII-2:
Minimum Number of Staff in Resource Room**

Staffing Pattern	One-Stop Career Center
One staff + other staff assisting as needed or serving part-time	Berkeley; Boulder; Clallam County; Hemet; Longmont; North Philadelphia; Riverside; Washington County
Two staff (second staff person often receptionist) + other staff assisting as needed or working part-time	Fremont; Kitsap County; Lubbock; Massapequa; North Fulton County; Plain View; Richmond; Northwest Philadelphia; Trident
Three staff + other staff assisting as needed or working part-time	East Oakland; Franklin; Hicksville; Hillsdale
Four or more staff + other staff assisting as needed or working part-time	Brazos County (five staff); Downtown Oakland (seven staff)

In addition to having dedicated staff, 13 centers reported also using rotating staff in their resource rooms. These were staff from one or more on-site center partners who were assigned to work rotating shifts in the resource room in addition to their other duties. In most of these centers, rotating staff were used to assist dedicated resource room staff; only three—Hillsdale, Franklin, and Northwest Philadelphia—reported using rotating staff exclusively.

While the primary reason for using rotating staff was to assist dedicated resource room staff in providing general assistance to customers, rotating staffing was also a means for providing customers with access to specialized expertise. For example, in the North Fulton County One-Stop Career Center in Georgia, WIA career advisors alternated daily shifts in the resource room to provide self-service customers with access to career counseling.

At least 15 centers further supplemented their resource room staffing by using part-time staff. These part-time staff were commonly Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) or Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) participants, college interns, or WIA Youth program participants. Typically, these staff worked part-time in the center as part of a required program activity to gain job skills, and were not allowed to work more than about 20 hours per week.¹

When resource room usage was high, another 13 centers reported that one or more One-Stop Career Center staff who were not regularly assigned to work in the resource room would assist with serving self-service customers. For example, in the Kitsap County One-Stop Career Center, the resource room often became very busy after the center's workshop for UI recipients. At these times, the center's manager would call "all hands on deck" and direct all available center staff to assist in the resource room.

The addition of these rotating, part-time, and as-needed staff was one possible reason why it was observed during the site visits that more than half of the resource rooms had staff-to-customer ratios of 1:10 or better, despite the small numbers of dedicated resource room staff reported in Exhibit VIII-2.² However, some centers had ratios as high as 1:20.

Funding of Resource Room Staff

In 17 centers, the majority of the resource room staff were funded by either WIA Adult/Dislocated Worker program funds (nine centers)³ or Wagner-Peyser funds (six centers). In two other centers, resource room staff were funded by an equal mix of WIA and Wagner-Peyser funding.

In the remaining centers, funding from other sources was at least as important as the funding from WIA and/or Wagner-Peyser. In two of these centers, SCSEP was the other major funding source used to support resource room staff; in these cases, SCSEP participants, who were paid by the program to work part-time in the resource room, were among the resource room's chief staff. (In addition to these two centers, five other One-Stop Career Centers in the study also had one or more SCSEP participants staffing their resource rooms at the time of the site visits, and three others reported having had SCSEP participants work in their resource rooms in the recent past.)

¹ The programs that provided these workers are discussed in more detail in the next section.

² Another obvious reason would be low customer volume, which was certainly a factor in some of the centers serving more rural areas, such as the centers in Kitsap and Clallam counties in Washington and in Longmont, Colorado.

³ In addition to regular, permanent staff, two of these centers used WIA Youth Program participants as part-time staff in their resource rooms. These youths did so as a subsidized work experience activity through the program.

In two of the One-Stop Career Centers in which WIA- or Wagner-Peyser-funded staff were a minority, the primary source of support for resource room staff was the TANF program. In one of these centers, the resource room staff were regular employees of Sacramento County's TANF program. At a One-Stop Career Center in another LWIA, two resource room staff were TANF participants for whom part-time work at the center was considered community service employment. Two other centers also reported having had either TANF staff or participants working in their resource rooms.

At three centers, local colleges supplied staff in the form of interns or volunteers who worked part-time in resource rooms to gain work experience and skills, often as part of a required internship component of their academic programs. For example, at the time of the site visit, the Kitsap Career Center had two interns from Western Washington University's Human Services Program.

Other sources of support for resource room staff included the following:

- California National Guard (Fremont and Downtown Oakland).
- Local high schools (Downtown Oakland).
- Adult education (Richmond).
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (Brazos County).
- Job Corps (Franklin).
- Childcare agencies (Brazos County).

Assisting Self-Service Job Seekers

In addition to providing ongoing assistance, all of the centers included in this round of the study also provided first-time job-seeker customers with an orientation to resource room services and

Resource Room Staffing Examples

In the *Fremont, California, One-Stop Career Center*, one full-time, dedicated staff person employed by the California National Guard was assigned to work in the resource room, along with a full-time security guard. These dedicated staff were assisted by three Wagner-Peyser-funded staff who served two- to four-hour rotating shifts in the center's resource room, as well as a SCSEP participant who worked 20 hour per week.

In the *Hicksville, New York One-Stop Career Center*, the resource room had three dedicated Wagner-Peyser-funded staff, two of whom worked at the help desk and the other as the receptionist. A WIA-funded staff person also assisted as needed.

In the *Hillsdale One-Stop Career Center in Sacramento, California*, there were no dedicated resource room staff. Instead, all center staff spent at least one three-hour shift per week in the resource room, ensuring that at least two staff were available to help self-service customers at all times.

made referrals to One-Stop delivery system partners.⁴ This section describes these three forms of customer assistance.

Orientation to the Resource Room

In all One-Stop Career Centers visited for the study, customers using the resource room for the first time received some kind of orientation, either immediately or within a week of their first visit. In 15 centers, these orientations consisted of one-on-one informal meetings between the new customer and a resource room staff person.⁵ During these informal orientations, new customers typically received a brief tour of the resource room, as well as written documentation on center rules and hours, instruction on how to use the computers, recommended job search websites, a schedule of self-service workshops or upcoming employer recruitment sessions, and an introduction to other available services. Some centers also provided information on how to conduct a job search, develop a resume, and draft a cover letter, and some provided the hours and locations of other One-Stop Career Centers in the area.

In three of these centers, customers could also receive orientation information through an electronic medium. For example, in the Hemet center, customers could watch a continuously looping orientation video, and in the Brazos and Washington County centers, customers could utilize a computer-based orientation.

In the other centers, formal orientations were required of all new customers. In most of these centers, these were group sessions that lasted 30 minutes to an hour and were held anywhere from twice a day to two times a week, depending on customer volume and staff availability. During these orientations, customers typically learned about center services (including WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs), self-service tools, center rules and hours of operation, conducting a job search, developing a resume, and interview skills. These sessions were sometimes conducted by resource room staff and sometimes by other center staff.

In all of these centers, customers could not use the resource room until they had attended an orientation. However, in the Franklin One-Stop Career Center, where orientations were held just twice a week, resource room staff sometimes provided “emergency” one-on-one orientations for customers who needed to use services immediately.

In the two centers visited in the Boulder LWIA, formal one-on-one orientations were required. These sessions typically lasted 20–30 minutes and were conducted by Wagner-Peyser-funded

⁴ This section will not cover referrals to WIA staff-assisted core, intensive or training services, as this topic was covered in Chapter II.

⁵ In five of these centers, formal, group orientations were also offered, but not required.

employment advisors. During these meetings, employment advisors determined each customer's veteran status and eligibility for unemployment compensation; assessed needs, barriers, and skills; and discussed the customer's desired salary and location for employment. Employment advisors also provided customers with written materials on the local labor market, the center's code of conduct, available self-service workshops, and job search websites and hotlines.

Several of the centers that offered only informal, one-on-one orientations at the time of the site visit had previously required formal, group orientations. Respondents at these centers gave several reasons for changing their mode of delivery. One reason mentioned was that staffing cuts had made it difficult for resource room staff to devote enough time to developing and facilitating formal orientations on a daily basis. Respondents at two centers also noted that a low volume of customers made group orientations impractical.

Providing Ongoing Assistance within the Resource Room

In all of the centers, customers could use the resource room as often as they chose after receiving an orientation. In most centers, each time a customer returned, he or she first had to check in with a resource room staff person, who would record the visit and the planned activities in the center's MIS.⁶ Following this check-in, resource room staff usually directed customers to the equipment or resources they wanted to use, often a computer with Internet access.

According to resource room staff, many of these customers typically needed at least some one-on-one assistance each time they visited, with some requiring a significant amount of help from staff. The most common type of assistance was providing help using resource room equipment, particularly computers. Most commonly, staff showed customers how to do the following tasks:

- access and navigate the Internet
- cut and paste
- open an email account
- register or log on to the state's Internet job matching system
- use computer software and applications such as tutorials, resume creation programs, and assessments
- upload resumes
- fill out online job applications

⁶ More information on the systems and processes used to capture information about resource room use was provided in Chapter V.

In addition, in centers such as the Fremont One-Stop Career Center, where customers were not allowed to do copying themselves, resource room staff assisted customers with using other equipment such as the copy and fax machines.

Resource room staff also provided one-on-one assistance with job-search-related activities such as filling out hard-copy job applications and preparing cover letters and resumes. Sometimes this assistance was provided on the spot—such as through the Hillsdale and Franklin centers’ “10-minute resume critique.” However, in other cases, customers prepared draft materials and then gave them to staff for review. As an example of this system, the Downtown Oakland Career Center had a box where customers could leave their resumes to be critiqued.

Another common activity for resource room staff was to field questions about UI. Because no staff directly connected with UI worked in any of the resource rooms included in the study, resource room staff could provide only basic information, such as telling customers that they must register on the state’s Internet job-matching system to be eligible for benefits. For all other questions, resource room staff generally directed customers to call the state’s UI hotline on one of the center’s phones. In the East Oakland Career Center, resource room staff were also able to provide additional assistance by patching calls directly to live UI staff, enabling customers to avoid the state’s automated UI phone system.

Often, the primary resource room staff members who provided this on-going, one-on-one assistance were the ones assigned to the help desk. While in a few centers these staff members remained at the help desk most or all of the time, in most centers help desk staff spent a significant amount of their time roaming the resource room, looking for customers who needed help. Thus, it was easy for customers who needed assistance to get a staff member’s attention, either by raising a hand, calling out, or walking up to them. In the East Oakland One-Stop Career Center, customers could also request assistance from roaming staff by putting a sign atop their computers. However, in centers with relatively unfavorable customer-to-staff ratios, resource room staff were often either stuck at the help desk signing customers in or busy helping other customers, so customers had to obtain assistance by standing in line at the help desk.

Staff Approach to Providing Assistance to Self-Service Customers

Resource room staff tended to adopt an approach to providing one-on-one assistance to self-service customers that focused on empowering customers and helping them deal with their sense of helplessness. Staff at six centers specifically mentioned trying to help customers in a way that did not encourage their continued dependence on staff assistance but instead had the goal of supporting customers to do things on their own. For example, a resource room staff person from the Trident Career Center said he would not create a customer’s resume, even if that was what the customer wanted. Instead, he would encourage the customer to create the resume on his or

her own but offer to critique it when it was done. He adopted this approach deliberately to help customers overcome their sense of ineptitude and boost their self-confidence. Along the same lines, a staff person from the Downtown Oakland Career Center said that she tries to be respectful and not patronizing of customers.

Resource room staff from four centers also specifically talked about how they sometimes had to take on the role of a mental health counselor. For example, the lead resource room staff person in Richmond said she often had to “play psychologist” because “sometimes customers just need someone to listen to them talk about how they feel about losing their job.” Resource room staff from the East Oakland Career Center similarly said that an important part of their job was to be empathetic and flexible toward customers, helping them to calm down and move beyond the anger they might feel about losing their jobs.

Referring Self-Service Customers to Partner Services

An important service provided by resource room staff is to refer self-service customers to other programs and agencies—usually One-Stop delivery system partners—for more intensive services. In all 25 centers, these referrals generally took place at some point after the customer began using self-services, but in at least nine centers resource room staff noted that they made referrals during intake if a brief assessment revealed both likely eligibility and need. For example, in the Kitsap County Career Center, any new customer who needed more than 10 minutes of assistance the first time he or she used the resource room was referred to a Wagner-Peysner-funded staff person.

Resource room respondents reported that some agencies received more referrals than others. The agencies receiving the most referrals are listed below, in order of how often they were mentioned by respondents. Most of these agencies are mandated One-Stop delivery system partners.

- Job Corps and other youth programs such as YouthBuild and WIA Youth Services
- Adult Basic Education agencies, for GED and/or literacy services
- community or technical colleges
- SCSEP & other senior services programs
- TANF agencies
- veterans’ agencies, particularly those providing Veterans’ Employment and Training Services
- agencies providing specialized assistance to ex-offenders
- Employment Service offices, when such staff were not co-located at the center
- disability agencies other than VR

A few center respondents also reported that they sometimes made referrals to other partners, such as mental health or substance abuse treatment providers, computer training providers, Food Stamps agencies, the Trade Adjustment Assistance program, child support agencies, health care providers, the National Farmworker Jobs Program, private staffing firms, child care agencies, higher education providers, and housing services.

At about half the centers, staff made these referrals merely by providing customers with the name and address of the referral partner. A more formal process was used in the Clallam, Kitsap, and Trident Career Centers, where staff typically called or emailed referral partners to let them know a customer was being referred, and in the Lubbock Career Center, where staff set up appointments for customers with on-site partners. Two additional centers filled out referral forms that were sent to the referral agency. For example, North Fulton County used this approach when resource room staff referred self-service customers to providers of job readiness, computer, or literacy training.

Other Self-Service-Related Duties

Respondents noted that, in addition to providing ongoing assistance to customers, center staff had other duties related to providing self-services, such as enforcing center rules. For example, most centers had time limits on computer use, and resource room staff had to enforce those limits. Centers also typically had rules requiring the appropriate use of computers and phones, and prohibiting other behavior such as cell phone use. In some centers, respondents noted that enforcing these rules absorbed a significant amount of resource room staff time.

Another duty of some center staff was to prepare and facilitate workshops for self-service customers. As will be discussed in Chapter IX, a number of centers offered at least one workshop for self-service customers. While sometimes the curricula for these workshops were developed elsewhere, in many cases center staff had to develop them from scratch or at least customize them to fit the needs and requirements of their center. In addition, center staff had to facilitate these workshops, which were often provided on a weekly or biweekly basis.

Finally, the preparation and updating of resource room materials also required time from center staff. For example, most resource room respondents noted that they regularly printed out hard-copy job listings and announcements from the Internet and put them into binders or posted them on bulletin boards. In addition, many respondents also reported reorganizing and updating all resource room materials on an annual or biennial basis. In centers that served large numbers of limited-English-proficient customers, such as Longmont and Richmond, center staff said they spent time translating key materials into languages other than English.

Training for Resource Room Staff

Due to the wide variety of services provided by resource room staff, and the large proportion of their number who are rotating and part-time, training for resource room staff would seem to be particularly important. Indeed, all centers reported that they provided at least some type of training for resource room staff. The most common form of training (noted by seven centers) consisted of informal, on-the-job training in which experienced staff provided information on resource room duties to new staff.

In addition, resource room staff were typically included in broader One-Stop Career Center staff trainings on a variety of topics. The most common of these topics was how to use electronic and Internet-based tools. For example, in 11 centers, staff reported receiving training on how to use their state's Internet-based job matching system. In both the Franklin and Hillsdale Career Centers in Sacramento, staff also received training on how to assist customers in creating resumes using newly purchased resume development software.

Seven centers reported providing training to resource room staff on how to provide good customer service, particularly to special needs customers.⁷ Trainings for One-Stop Career Center staff were also reported on a variety of other topics:

- partner services, such as WIA and Wagner-Peyser
- cardiopulmonary resuscitation
- workshop facilitation
- resume development
- analysis of labor market information
- providing employment readiness and job-search or job-placement assistance
- communications skills
- conducting triage assessments
- sexual harassment and the filing of harassment grievances
- Global Career Development Facilitator Certification⁸

⁷ Note that training on working with disabled customers was described in Chapter IV.

⁸ The Global Career Development Facilitator project was initially developed in 1997 through a collaborative arrangement between the Center for Credentialing and Education, Inc.(CCE), the National Career Development Association (NCDA), and the National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (NOICC). Since that time, the Global Career Development Facilitator (GCDF) curriculum was developed, offering country-specific standardization and recognition to career development professionals. Specific career areas include career group facilitator, job search trainer, career resource center coordinator, career coach, and labor market information resource specialist, among others.

- career coaching
- dealing with domestic violence

Conclusion

Contrary to the expectation that job-seeker and employer customers would use self-service tools and resources with little assistance, One-Stop Career Center respondents asserted that most customers need a considerable amount of assistance from resource room staff to use those tools effectively. Most centers had, on average, two resource room staff to provide this assistance, usually funded by WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs, Wagner-Peyser, or SCSEP. However, because a majority of centers also used part-time, rotating, or as-needed staff in their resource rooms, staff-to-customer ratios were as favorable as 1:5 in some centers—but as high as 1:20 in others.

All of the centers had a similar customer flow for self-services. New customers had to fill out applications or intake forms and were then provided with an orientation. In most centers, these orientations were informal, one-on-one sessions with resource room staff and included a tour of the center and a review of center rules and procedures. After orientation, customers could use the resource room as often as they liked, and were assisted by staff who either roamed or were assigned to the help desk.

Resource room staff provided numerous types of ongoing, one-on-one assistance to job-seeker customers, particularly help using computers and basic job search assistance. Customers indicated their need for assistance in one of these areas by approaching staff, raising their hands, calling out, or standing in line at the help desk. In assisting self-service customers, many resource room staff tried to empower customers to do things on their own, and others felt that they needed to take on the role of mental health counselor for customers. Resource room staff also referred self-service job-seeker customers to a number of One-Stop system partners, usually by giving the customer the name and address of the partner.

In addition to helping customers one-on-one, center staff also spent time enforcing resource room rules, developing and facilitating self-service workshops, and updating, organizing, and translating resource room materials. They participated in training sessions for staff, the most common of which took the form of on-the-job training and workshops on how to help customers in using electronic self-service tools.

Respondents noted a number of challenges related to staffing self-services. The most commonly cited challenge (noted by respondents at ten centers) was under-staffing of the resource room. While in most centers respondents wanted more staff to provide general assistance, in a few others, center managers cited a need for these staff to have specific skills. For example, the manager of one center said he required an additional staff person who could facilitate self-service

workshops, while another specifically sought to hire a security guard to deal with a spate of recent security problems in the resource room. A third One-Stop Career Center manager wanted to hire a mental health counselor to deal with self-service customers with severe mental health problems. Respondents from a fourth center wanted more staff who could speak both Spanish and English, a need echoed by customers in two other centers.

The primary reason cited for the lack of needed staff was decreased funding from both WIA and Wagner-Peyser, which resulted in staff layoffs or no replacement of staff who left or retired. Respondents cited the low wages paid to center staff as contributing to high staff turnover, which worsened problems of inadequate staffing and a general lack of experienced staff.

The lack of adequate staffing for resource rooms meant that customers were often left on their own even though they needed and wanted help. As one resource room staff person put it, “Self-services is a misnomer. Customers need services and help. But we just aren’t equipped to provide it.” Customers interviewed at three centers echoed this sentiment by saying that they had not received as much assistance as they needed. As one of these customers remarked, “I felt like I was on my own because of the lack of assistance. Staff need to provide more help.”

A number of center respondents also asserted that inadequate staffing resulted in resource room staff who are exceptionally busy—so busy at one center, in fact, that staff reported often skipping lunch—and this level of workload has left staff feeling stressed and frustrated. This might have been the reason why another One-Stop Career Center manager reported that motivating resource room staff was a challenge.

As discussed, one way that some centers have tried to deal with the lack of staff in the resource room is to require most One-Stop Career Center staff to serve rotating shifts. However, the three centers that rely solely on rotating staff noted that there are some challenges with such arrangements. For example, some respondents from these centers said that rotating staff have difficulty gaining a high level of comfort and expertise in working with resource room tools and self-service customers. In addition, they noted that rotating staff were often distracted or pulled away from the resource room by their other duties. A third challenge noted by one center manager was the difficulty of creating a sense of teamwork among staff from different agencies who spent only certain shifts working together.

Another way that centers have tried to deal with the lack of funding for staff is to use participants and volunteers from SCSEP, TANF, local colleges, and the WIA Youth Program to serve as part-time staff in the resource room. However, these staff, while costing centers nothing, typically have little or no prior customer service experience and limited work experience. Indeed, they are assigned to One-Stop Career Centers to gain such experience so that many can eventually find unsubsidized employment.

Centers tried to overcome the limited experience and educational backgrounds of resource room staff by providing training. However, the most common type of training provided to resource room staff was informal, on-the-job training from a more experienced resource room staff member, which is unlikely to lead to substantial skill increases very quickly.

Although centers also provided some training on other topics, such as using electronic tools and customer service, for a number of reasons this type of formal training was not provided as often as center managers would have liked. First, respondents at five centers reported that a lack of funding limited the number of trainings they could provide. Respondents at the Downtown Oakland and Trident Career Centers specifically noted that they would like to provide their resource room staff with additional training on dealing with difficult customers, but lacked the funding to do so. Even for those centers that did have funding for training, finding time for staff to participate in training was a challenge mentioned by four centers.

Consequently, due to the use of rotating and part-time staff, the limited amount of training provided, and high staff turnover, resource room staff as a group often had relatively limited skills to provide assistance to self-service customers. Because resource room staff commonly help customers use center equipment, provide job search assistance, and even provide counseling to customers in crisis, their lack of experience and formal training in these areas means that the assistance they offer is not as effective as it would be with better qualified staff.

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IX. INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

This chapter reviews the types of information and self-directed resources available to customers seeking services at the One-Stop Career Centers studied. These resources include a wide range of tools designed to assist customers with varying interests and skill levels throughout the entire job search process. Additionally, the chapter examines self-service tools designed for employers. In addition to examining the tools and materials available overall, the chapter also documents the extent to which these resources are available in hard-copy or electronic form within each site, because this provides a useful assessment of the degree of computer literacy required of self-service customers.

Although customers make use of self-directed tools and services for a variety of reasons, most visitors to the One-Stop Career Centers are seeking employment. Given this fact, the organization of this chapter generally follows the path that a typical job-seeker might take: it begins with tools that assess skills and interests, continues with information on education and training opportunities as well as the labor market generally, moves on to tools designed to strengthen pre-vocational skills or to enhance one's job search skills, and concludes with the job listings and matching available at each of the centers. For each of these categories, the chapter describes the materials and resources available to customers, notes the formats in which they are offered, and describes the challenges noted by staff and customers in using the resources.

Assessment and Career Planning

All the centers included in our sample offer customers self-service options for individualized assessment and career planning. First these tools are described, and then the challenges customers face in using them are discussed.

Tools Available

Despite the fact that the services to be discussed in this section are categorized as self-service, staff noted that various forms of staff intervention play a key role in job-seeker career planning. As an example, some One-Stop Career Center staff administer assessments in individual or group settings using online or hard-copy tools. In several sites, staff are available to help customers interpret their assessment results.

Nevertheless, in each site there are tools available for use that are categorized as self-service. These include resources developed by state or federal agencies and those developed by private vendors. In the majority of sites, self-service offerings include both electronic and hard-copy resources; most sites also offer a variety of workshops that introduce universal customers to career assessment resources.

Publicly-funded tools. Many of the centers rely on assessment tools that have been developed publicly, primarily by their states, but in some cases by the federal government. Four states in our sample—Georgia, New York, South Carolina, and Texas—have developed online assessment and career planning tools that are used by the centers in those states, and are available for remote use. The resource tools in this category include the following:

**Exhibit IX-1:
State-developed Assessment and Career Planning Tools**

State	Name of Tool	Overview of Functions
Georgia	Georgia Career Information Center website	This site includes an online assessment tool that helps to match one’s work preferences and life priorities to occupations, and provides a skills assessment for customers.
New York	JobZone	An online portal that is part of several tools that provide online job search and career planning to job-seekers. JobZone provides information on 900 occupations matched with relevant and content-based information based on each customer’s interests and assessed level of skills. Similarly, New York offers Career Zone, an online tool in which customers can click on a job title from any of six major categories and be linked to other job titles that require similar skills and interests.
South Carolina	South Carolina’s Virtual One-Stop System	An online virtual tool that includes an extensive section on career planning, which includes projections, trends, tips on how to get a job in a specific industry, and how to receive more training if needed. Under Job Seeker services, website users can choose a link called, “10 Steps”, to explore specific steps that job seekers can follow on the path to a new job.
Texas	OSCAR	An online assessment tool that is a product of the Texas Workforce Commission’s Career Development Resources. This system allows self-service customers to assess work importance, value, and interest. For example, the Work Importance Locator can help job seekers learn more about their work values by ranking six work values in their order of importance. Their resulting score can then be matched with occupations with which their work values would be consistent.

In addition to these state-funded assessment tools, customers in Philadelphia make frequent use of the federally-funded (U.S. Department of Labor) Career Voyages web site. This site includes Career Compass, which provides a brief assessment of occupational interests and identifies high-growth and high-wage industries, as well as America’s Career Resource Network’s Career-Decision-Making Tool, which provides a more detailed assessment as well as career guidance.

Commercially-developed tools. In addition to state tools, privately developed and sponsored assessment products also are used widely in job seeker career planning through the One-Stop Career Centers. Clearly the most widely used of these resources is the *Choices* tool, which was noted as the main assessment and career planning tool in seven of the LWIAs. *Choices* is a career exploration tool that allows users to determine which employment areas they would like to pursue. *Choices* contains interest inventories, data on transferable skills, and an aptitude test. Customers can take the aptitude test and instantaneously receive their results; these results are then matched to occupations that fit best with these aptitudes. With the list of matching occupations, users can follow links to more information on specific careers that fit with these occupations, information on the demand for these occupations within their local and state labor markets, and specific job listings for these occupations. As an interactive program, *Choices* can be self-administered, used for individualized counseling, or delivered in a group environment.

Staff encouraged the use of *Choices* because it offers several functions and feedback options for customers seeking the most appropriate career path. Customers appreciated the thorough printouts of current skill levels and descriptions of how these skills can be transferred to other professions. Additionally, *Choices* enables customers to create a career portfolio. Once customers complete an aptitude and skills assessment, they can choose a career of interest and the *Choices* system will list all available college majors that can train for the chosen position. For most customers, having this list can alleviate some of the work of researching which majors will prepare for specific careers. If a customer is uncertain about which occupation or education provider to choose, *Choices* allows him or her to compare two careers or two schools side-by-side.

Although *Choices* is the most commonly used tool across the centers in our sample, other privately developed resources are available as well. Sacramento, in particular, provided a wide array of self-service resources for assessing career interests and aptitudes. In addition to *Choices*, Sacramento offers *Prove It*, which focuses on personality traits, biographical history, and problem solving abilities; the *Picture Interest Career Survey*, which identifies occupational interests by using pictures of people to create a profile of an individual's potential career and job matches; *Ideas*, which helps customers determine their areas of greatest vocational interest; the "*Quick Guide*" *Skill Review*, which includes 12 questions related to Reading for Information, Locating Information, Applied Mathematics, and others that can guide an individual toward potential careers; and the *WorkKeys Skills and Personal Skills Assessments*, which provide in-depth employability skills assessments or personality characteristics that can be linked to potential careers and employment opportunities.

In addition, at least two of the centers use ACT's *Discover Online Career Planning*, which uses comprehensive, developmental guidance to help customers identify their strengths and build a

career plan based on their personal strength profile. This system offers thorough, current databases of occupations, college majors, schools and training institutions, and financial aid and scholarships.

Still other centers list a variety of online sources that are available for career assessment, such as WorkforceExplorer.com, CareerInfonet.com, and CareerOneStop.com. Several centers similarly provide links for customers to access career assessment tools offered through O*NET. O*NET's assessment functions enable customers to search occupations by their skill sets. Even though these links are available to customers, however, staff reported that use of them was fairly minimal, and there was no means for documenting whether or how often customers accessed these resources.

The *Test of Adult Basic Education* (TABE) is also available online in several of the sites. This test assesses individuals' reading and math skill levels and, thus, provides a tool for matching their basic skills to occupations. Staff in each of the sites in which this test was available, however, noted that because of the time required for completing the test (3 to 4 hours) it is rarely used by self-service customers.

Although most of these resources are available electronically, such that customers can directly link their skill or other assessment information to specific career options, all One-Stop Career Centers also offer books, pamphlets, and one-page handouts on self assessments for career planning. For example, South Carolina offers hard-copy documents that assist customers in brainstorming their ideal job, salary needs, and qualifications. Several sites also offer books on career exploration, such as *What Color is Your Parachute?* And a number of sites provide customers with pamphlets or flyers designed to help assess skills and interests. In Oyster Bay, for example, customers have access to a large number of pamphlets, with titles such as "Assessing Your Job Skills: Where Do I Stand," "How to Choose a Career: A Guide to Self-Assessment," and "Identifying Your Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities."

Staff in each of the sites felt that the online resources were vastly superior to the hard-copy ones, because of their interactivity and superior ability to link customers directly to specific occupations or industries for which their skills and interests are a suitable match. Despite this preference, however, hard-copy materials are available because some self-service customers simply are not comfortable using the interactive and electronic tools available to them.

Workshops. All One-Stop Career Centers studied also offer workshops that include a discussion of assessment and career planning, although typically there is little actual planning that occurs during these workshops; instead, customers are encouraged to use the electronic or hard-copy assessment tools described above. In at least two sites, however, there are workshops heavily devoted to career assessment. For example, at Oyster Bay, workshops focus on self-assessment, career exploration, and transferable skills. These workshops provide job seekers

with an opportunity to learn more about what they enjoy doing, conduct an inventory of values, interests, and strengths, and identify skills that are transferable to new industries and occupations. Two separate sessions are available, one entitled “Self Assessment and Career Exploration” and another entitled “Transferable Skills.”

Similarly, as part of a five-day workshop offered in Oakland, participants take part in a daylong session entitled “Preparing for Your Job Search” that focuses on career and skills assessment, goal-setting, and completing applications for employment. In these workshops, customers complete assessment tools and brainstorm about skill areas and how these link to occupations of interest.

Challenges in Using Self-Service Assessment and Career Planning Tools

Career planning and assessment tools can provide invaluable insight into a customer’s work ethics, career interests, skills, and talents. Using information gleaned from self-administered career planning assessments, customers can identify relevant occupations and specific local employment opportunities that match their interests and skills. And, to the extent these tools are available online, they allow the universal customer access from anywhere with an Internet connection. Despite this broad access and potential utility, however, staff and customers identified a number of factors that limit the comprehensive use of these tools by self-service customers.

- *Lower-skilled workers appear to experience difficulty* accessing and navigating through links while more computer-literate job seekers use the systems more seamlessly. Several of the assessment software programs are not user friendly; thus, customers need assistance using online tools. One-Stop Career Centers also note that youth used the Internet assessment programs more often than adult job seekers did, perhaps because of their greater facility with computer technology.
- *Most customers need staff assistance* to interpret career assessment results and to make accurate and realistic career decisions.
- *Detailed software assessments require too many hours to complete.* Lengthy assessments can discourage customers from using them. Shorter assessments are easier to complete, but may be less reliable and informative.
- *Customers may not understand which software programs are best suited to their needs.* Although staff at many sites provide recommendations on which types of self-assessment and career planning programs best suit customers, other sites provide little guidance.

Thus, although career assessment and exploration tools can serve as useful occupational planning guides for customers of One-Stop Career Centers, typically these assessments are most beneficial when complemented with some type of staff assistance and guidance. Therefore, customers

using these tools with little to no staff assistance may not receive a full overview of how their skills and interests can be best matched to occupational choices or employment opportunities. As a result, although customers have access to a variety of assessment tools, most centers noted that they do not heavily market the use of online or hard-copy assessment tools. Instead, staff feel the need to provide assistance through individualized career planning and one-on-one interpretation of assessment results.

Information on Education and Training Opportunities

As noted above, customers often access career assessment and planning tools to identify occupations that match their interests. For many of these customers, such occupations require additional education or training. Thus, an important component of self-services is the ability to gather information about potential education and training providers in a customer's local area. In addition to documenting these self-service resources, the study discovered challenges to their use as well.

Tools Available

The One-Stop Career Centers we visited offer customers access to a range of information on available providers and opportunities. This section describes the tools and resources available to self-service customers for obtaining information on these education and training opportunities.

Electronic resources. As implied above, electronic access to information on education and training providers is often “bundled” with career assessment and planning tools, thereby enabling customers to obtain descriptive information about their skills and interests, link this information to specific careers or employment opportunities, and obtain information on education and training programs offering programs of study relevant to these occupations. As an example, the *Choices* program not only is a commonly used assessment tool, but it also contains lists of schools throughout the country and provides direct links to a variety of education programs offered at four-year colleges and technical schools. Thus, some access to information on education and training providers is provided as part of a package with the assessment tools described above.

Easily the most common source of information on education and training opportunities and providers is the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), a list that identifies providers that have been approved by each state as eligible for providing training services under WIA. Although each state, under WIA, is required to compile its list, the information for each approved provider can vary substantially across states. States' ETPL systems usually include a search feature (see Exhibit IX-2 for an example) linked to a provider database with extensive information on local providers, including their performance with prior cohorts of participants, an exhaustive list of the

training or education programs they offer, and even a schedule of when certain courses or opportunities are available. For example, in the California sites customers can access the online Vendor Performance Report, which provides information on providers' performance, including the percentage of participants that completes training, the percentage that obtains employment following training, certification rates, post-program earnings information, and other key outcomes of interest. In other cases, however, the state ETPL contains less information, instead focusing primarily on listing the eligible providers, thereby leaving further research about them to the individual customer. In at least eight of the centers, customers could fill out a brief online application and assessment, and then retrieve descriptive information concerning occupations and available programs of study at these providers.

Other electronic tools for accessing information on education and training providers are less common. In a few sites, such as Oakland and Alameda County, self-service users had access to direct electronic links to other local training providers, even if these were not on the ETPL, as well as links to information on financial assistance for education. In these sites, customers could thus identify training providers that were outside the list of "approved" providers on the ETPL and simultaneously investigate possible mechanisms for paying for these programs (since WIA funds could not be used for such training).

Similarly, in at least four sites, customers can access electronic information concerning apprenticeship programs in their area. In each case, customers can follow an electronic link directly to an apprenticeship website.

Printed materials. In addition to online offerings, all One-Stop Career Centers in the sample provide customers with at least some hard-copy information concerning educational and training providers. Typically, sections of a resource room are devoted to materials on education and training providers. Included in these sections are materials such as course catalogues for local universities, colleges and technical schools, brochures or flyers for these schools and other training providers, posters advertising GED preparatory courses, hard copies of the state's ETPL, and pamphlets summarizing occupational areas that are in high demand in the current (and projected) economy. Although in several sites these materials were clearly organized and arranged (either alphabetically by provider or grouped according to type of provider or area of training) and appeared current, in a number of other sites these printed materials were not arranged in any systematic fashion, and were not up-to-date. In three sites, these printed materials were not clearly marked or visible in the resource room and, thus, customers were largely unaware of their presence unless they knew to ask about them.

Exhibit IX-2

Example of how to find eligible training providers in Pennsylvania and Texas

In Pennsylvania, a job seeker can access education and training information via the state Commonwealth Workforce Development System. The system includes a module to research eligible training providers and their WIA-approved programs of study. The system does not require the customer to have a login name or password to search for basic criteria. To conduct an adequate search, customers must first specify, at minimum, the geographic area in which they wish the search to be conducted (either county, city, or zip), and whether they are searching for a provider or a program of study. Optionally, customers can limit the search to programs that are Pell-eligible, or to programs that offer an apprenticeship program.

Information available about courses of study includes the following elements:

- Location
- Program description
- Cost
- Length
- Start and end dates
- Whether certificates are awarded
- Performance information, as required by WIA (though information is not available for all programs)

In Texas, once customers register into Work In Texas, the homepage typically offers a very extensive range of providers, including specific workshops and courses that they offer. Although customers retrieve information on hundreds of educational and training providers, customers who visit the Brazos Valley One-Stop Career Center most typically enroll at Blinn College to take courses and training because of its close proximity and variety of programs offered. Therefore, staff noted that convenience to the center played an important role in which schools customers choose for education and training opportunities.

Workshops. Some One-Stop Career Centers go beyond merely offering online or printed resources and materials concerning education and training opportunities in the resource room. Leveraging local community partnership resources for self-service customers is one way centers make a variety of vendor services available. For example, as a partner to the Fremont One-Stop Career Center, a Hayward Adult School representative provides workshops for customers on how to obtain assistance in getting a GED or a high school diploma. In Oakland, local education providers occasionally provide workshops summarizing their courses, areas of study, and how these link to available employment opportunities. Further, staff in Oyster Bay provide a workshop on training and educational opportunities within the community, although they do warn customers that they must be determined eligible for these programs. Hence, the workshops

and information about the programs are provided to self-service users, but the programs themselves are of course limited to those receiving more intensive services.

Challenges in Using Information on Education and Training Opportunities

Although all One-Stop Career Centers provide some information on education and training opportunities to their self-service customers, there remain several challenges to accessing or successfully using these resources.

- Centers often *lacked substantial hard-copy marketing resources* for private schools and community colleges. Although the ETPL provides some information on these programs, this information is not always complete nor does it focus on some areas of interest to customers, such as accessibility by public transit. Several centers had an average of only one or two providers' information available in print form. Typically, resources came from those programs that were closest in proximity to the center, thereby limiting the variety of programs customers could choose from only to those that were nearby.
- Materials in several center libraries were *outdated* (more than twenty years old) and unorganized, and were thus rarely used by customers.
- *Visibility* of education and training provider resources occasionally was quite poor. At one center, a customer stated he was unaware of available providers or that he could be eligible for a training program. Providing handouts and other information about education and training providers, or making them highly visible in the resource room, could improve customers' knowledge and use of these tools.
- *Significant variability in the comprehensiveness and awareness of the ETPL system.* As noted above, states vary in the comprehensiveness of the information available through the ETPL. As a result, customers in some states have easy access to a formal ranking system of providers on this list, while those in other states must navigate more carefully to obtain comparative information on provider performance. Further, a few centers' staff members stated that they encourage customers to enroll in one program over another, often because they are more familiar with the recommended program. Ensuring that the state's ETPL system effectively and easily provided access to provider rankings and performance would give customers greater and more systematic information on which to make their education or training decisions.

Labor Market Information

All sites offer individual customers access to a variety of labor market information (LMI) in both electronic and printed form. Most typically, electronic LMI was available through a state-developed web page or links to various local, state, and national sponsored websites. Resource libraries also contain sections devoted to LMI, which include both reference materials and

narrative reports and publications on labor markets. Most centers also provide workshops that touch on LMI at least briefly. These are discussed below.

Tools Available

All centers provide access to state-developed online systems that provide labor market information. For example:

- At the *Trident* center, customers use computers in the resource room to retrieve LMI through a link on the main page of the state website. Through this link, customers can review the latest South Carolina report on the analysis of current trends in the state's population, economic growth, workforce, wages and income, and traditional and emerging industries. Job seekers can find various types of jobs through three separate links: hot jobs, fastest growing jobs, and jobs with good opportunities and wages that do not require a college degree. Customers can also access a major source of occupation information through O*NET OnLINE at <http://online.onetcenter.org/>.
- The *Oakland* center offers customers a handout with instructions on how to retrieve LMI from the California EDD website, which contains information on job titles and descriptions, trends, job growth outlook, training requirements, skills and qualifications, and demand occupation information.
- The *Sacramento* center produces a publication each year called the Occupation Outlook and Training Directory for the Sacramento region. The publication contains information on more than 200 occupations and 400 types of schools and training programs. The publication contains county profiles in detail and a directory of county training providers. Training providers include adult education programs, private schools, apprenticeship programs, and occupational programs. Occupational profiles include information on wages and benefits, employment trends, and employment requirements.
- The *Oyster Bay* center offers a variety of ways to access LMI. The main resource for customers to access labor market information is the state-developed website, which provides information on trends in economic growth, workforce, wages and income, and traditional and emerging industries. Additionally, the centers offer pamphlets, including one titled *How to Access Local Labor Market Information* and another *Jobs with a Future*. They also give customers a handout with some basic labor market information located in the resource room.
- The *Philadelphia* One-Stop site offers most of its labor market information through the Commonwealth Workforce Development System (CWDS) through a link to the Center for Workforce Information and Analysis. The LMI this site provides includes: wage information, state and county economic and labor force summaries, targeted industry clusters (nine clusters that Pennsylvania has targeted for growth), a high priority occupation list, and projected demographic trends.

A number of key factors were cited as playing a role in whether customers would access LMI and find it useful to their job-seeking efforts. LMI is more likely to be used and found helpful when the following are true:

- LMI is *up-to-date*.
- LMI websites are *easy to navigate*.
- *Workshops clearly identify the importance* of conducting LMI research and demonstrate best practices and strategies for research.
- *Staff are competent* in the use of LMI and interpretation of data and concepts.
- LMI's *relevance* to customer goals and interests is made clear.
- LMI materials are *clearly visible* in the resource room.
- Staff are *cognizant of customer assessment of tools* and how often customers conduct LMI research.

Along these lines, the “user-friendliness” of LMI and the extent to which it adapts to the specific needs of the customer base strongly influence customer use. Because of this, some sites have made consistent efforts to make the LMI more accessible to the universal customer:

- Several centers provide a *handout of instructions* to customers on how to research LMI. In some cases, customers receive the handout in the introductory orientation, while in others it is posted near the computer stations. These instructions include a step-by-step guide on how to retrieve LMI websites and how to obtain specific geographic information.
- The Fremont center hosts a *Basic Internet for Job Seekers* workshop in which staff teach customers how to access and research LMI. Customers report that they find the workshop useful.

Challenges in Using LMI

As the above examples attest, One-Stop Career Centers make a number of resources available to the universal customer. However, using these resources effectively is difficult and many customers need assistance navigating labor market information websites and determining which print materials will best suit them. Most centers' staff members have the ability to show customers how to access websites with available LMI. Nevertheless, staff have a difficult time interpreting information and results accurately for job seekers. With limited staff proficiency on how to understand labor market information resources, self-service customers need to be able to analyze searches in order to effectively use the information with little or no staff assistance. Due to lack of staff competency in LMI research, several centers had recently provided staff training on interpreting labor market information and its relevance for customers' job search.

In addition, as a part of general workshop offerings, most centers offer workshops to the universal customer that touch on LMI. In most cases, these workshops provide general

information with LMI as one of several topics discussed. In general, the workshops, as well as orientations for new customers, acquaint job seekers with center services and other community and social services, teach customers the basics of LMI research techniques, and encourage the use of LMI.

Among other barriers to effective use of LMI at One-Stop Career Centers are the following:

- The geographic aggregate data *is not always specific* enough to be useful for those seeking careers within a limited geographic area.
- Data are not always *up-to-date*.
- *Limited computer literacy* hinders certain clients from accessing appropriate information without staff assistance.
- Job search is the primary reason customers visit the One Stop and *many do not see the value of LMI* in this effort.

Tools to Enhance Pre-Vocational Skills

When a customer has been recently laid off, completed a degree or certificate, or is merely considering a change in occupation, assessing his or her pre-vocational skills can be integral to making a sound career decision. To make an informed decision about a career track or educational goal, a customer may conduct self-assessments of her skills or interests, as described above. Customers who realize that they have limitations or deficiencies in pre-vocational skills may then wish to access tools and resources that are designed to strengthen these skills.

Prevocational skills are those that are important for any job, but are not focused on a specific vocation. Included in these skills are resume preparation and interviewing, basic skills such as math or reading, knowledge of and experience with typing and computers, and an understanding of what will be expected on a job, among others. All of the One-Stop Career Centers we visited offered their customers access to at least some pre-vocational skills training, though they varied widely both in the types of pre-vocational skills tools that were available and in the format in which they were offered.

Tools Available

Among the most common forms of pre-vocational skills training offered at the centers were self-paced typing courses and introductory workshops on using computers. Overwhelmingly, the most consistently offered tool was the *Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing* course, which allows customers to learn typing skills at their own pace. Nearly every site visited made this tool available to self-service users interested in learning to type or strengthening their existing skills.

Also, next most common were either self-paced computer tutorials or workshops designed to provide customers with basic computer skills. For example, Fulton County provided workshops

for customers focused on using the mouse and navigating folders. Additionally, this site provided self-paced tutorials for Microsoft software programs, including Word and Excel. Similarly, Oakland offered a multi-day basic computer skills workshop, including discussions of computer systems, hardware, software, and memory, information on creating documents and saving files, strategies for accessing online help and searching the Internet (specifically job search engines), and an overview of email. This site also provided a workshop on QuickBooks and Microsoft Excel. Oyster Bay offers workshops in basic computers, and introductory and intermediate-level courses on Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access, and Mail Merge. Further, Oyster Bay uses the *Prove It!* software, a proprietary system designed by Kenexa. This software provides over 900 skill and behavioral assessments for clerical, software, technical, call center, and other occupations. The software then points the customer to areas in which they are deficient, and then provides self-paced instruction in those areas to enable customers to remedy deficiencies. This software also allows customers to take pre- and post-tests to “prove” that they have the requisite skills necessary for a variety of jobs.

A number of centers also provided some information on how to enhance basic skills, including math, reading, or English language skills. As described above, all sites had some information about specific providers of education and training services. One-Stop Career Center staff noted that customers can get better services and training if they attend local community colleges and specialized training schools, as well as literacy programs, such as Trident Literacy Association in South Carolina, or the Literacy for Every Adult Program in Richmond, California. While the centers offer general training through workshops, specialized training providers can focus more time and attention on specific pre-vocational skill preparation. Several of these programs offer specialized classes on:

- GED preparation
- Basic computer skills
- Basic internet for job seekers
- English as a Second Language (ESL)

The Riverside site offers some training in these basic skills to self-service customers. Specifically, the center offers a “Skills Lab,” a workshop to assist those with limited basic reading and math skills. This workshop is led by a representative from the state’s Department of Education, and is available to the universal customer. Additionally, the Riverside site has developed an innovative concept for enhancing pre-vocational skills called the Product Box, which is described more fully in Exhibit IX-3.

Exhibit IX-3

One Stop Career Centers that Offer Unique Pre-Vocational Tools

The Riverside center offers job resources, specifically pre-vocational opportunities, to customers in their “Product Box,” located on the county website. The Product Box is a link of all Riverside electronic services, information about services at the One-Stop Career Centers, as well as links to local, county, and national websites with related resources. Under the “Product Box,” “Education/Skill Upgrade/Vocational Opportunities” is one of the main links available to website users. Under this link, categorical links pop up with web pages routing to Career InfoNet, Free Education on the Internet, School, College and Library Finder, and Spanish Lessons. Each link directs customers to specific websites. Although substantial information exists under the pre-vocational portion of the product box, the sites are extremely dense; thus, a customer may have difficulty navigating through the voluminous information. This website feature was only days new to the center at the time of the visit; thus, no feedback was yet available.

Another example of an electronic resource that provide self-service customers with access to pre-vocational information is the *Metrix Learning* system. NY Wired for Education developed this system to make clients more employable by allowing them to acquire more job skills in an efficient manner. NY Wired uses the O*NET job titles (approximately 1,100 listed) to help customers develop a plan. First, job seekers select a job title that they desire to obtain, and then take a self-assessment. The system provides the customer with a focused training that includes how they can address a skill gap. Customers can then create a personalized development plan that includes a job preparedness assessment and five to ten learning courses from a catalogue of over 6,000 courses.

Sacramento offers customers *KeyTrain*, an electronic training system available in all its One-Stop Career Centers, which provides educational training in reading and math. Sacramento also offers financial literacy courses to its customers. This course includes modules on cash management, financial planning, basics of banking, and creating a financial plan.

A number of other sites provided workshops to the universal customer on job readiness, including discussions on preparing resumes, interviewing techniques, appropriate dress habits, punctuality, demeanor, and other pre-vocational skills. Staff noted that these workshops were almost always heavily attended, and customers indicated that they found them to be helpful.

As one example, Oakland provides a five half-days workshop designed to strengthen its customers’ pre-vocational skills in a number of areas. Among the topics in the five sessions

are “Knock their Interview Socks Off,” which focuses on interviewing, dressing for success, and workers’ rights, and “Resumes that Get Attention,” which focuses on drafting both sound resumes and quality cover letters. Similarly, Sacramento offers soft skills training workshops, which focus on communication, office politics, problem solving, and time management.

Challenges in Using Pre-Vocational Tools

The primary challenge identified to customers’ use of tools designed to enhance their pre-vocational skills was that many customers do not believe they need to strengthen these skills. Thus, customers opt not to conduct assessments of their pre-vocational skills, or even, despite assessments that may indicate that developing these skills would be beneficial, customers remain uninterested in them. Given that these customers are self-service users, staff have very little interaction with them in which to encourage them to develop these skills.

A second challenge is that many of the tools focusing on pre-vocational skills require a significant investment of time. Because so many customers in the centers are seeking employment as soon as possible, often they feel that they do not have sufficient time to strengthen their pre-vocational skills. Hence, even if they see a need to do so, often customers opt not to work on these skills because of a perceived lack of time.

Job Listings and Job Search Assistance

Because most customers using One-Stop Career Centers are doing so because they are in search of employment, it is unsurprising that, across all One-Stop Career Centers studied, job listings and job search assistance are used far more heavily than all other tools and services. Both on-line and onsite job listing services provide customers with a way of finding both potential employers and jobs for which they may be suited, and job search assistance can enhance their ability to find and secure employment. The next section describes the job listing tools that One-Stop Career Centers offer their customers, including any limitations of these listings. The subsequent section describes job search assistance tools that customers can access.

Job Listings

Most One Stop Career Centers offer an orientation to job listing and job search services; typically, a staff member will conduct this orientation via a scheduled workshop or a one-on-one

orientation.¹ The orientation offers customers guidance on how to start conducting a job search via the state job matching system, which remains a primary source of job listings for all centers. Since several of the state websites are not easy to navigate due to an overwhelming amount of information and links or due to customers' lack of computer proficiency, staff members provide information on registering for a username and password, conducting a basic job search, and finding tools most relevant to the customer's needs. One-Stop Career Centers see a large number of customers come through their doors simply to use the state job listing system, making the orientation a useful introduction to this online portal.

Exhibit IX-4 identifies the state job listing system that is used in each of the One-Stop Career Centers, and the basic functions that each offers. In all but two cases, staff at the centers recommend their state's job listing database as the primary source for available employment opportunities. As can be seen in Exhibit IX-4, state job matching and listing systems vary in functionality. However, customers can, at a minimum, search, save, and apply to jobs on-line.

In addition, in many cases these state-developed websites provide links to other potential sources of job listings that customers can access. For example, CWDS (in Philadelphia) provides links to other job listing websites, including Monster, USAJOBS, Job Web, and CareerNet. Work In Texas has links that lead to government-supported job search engines, including one from the Brazos Valley local website (bvjobs.org). There are also links to other private job searching tools, including careersite.com, hireability.com, career.com, bigjobs.net, and hotjobs.com.

In addition to these direct links on state-developed websites, most of the One-Stop Career Centers also provide easy access for customers to alternative, generally privately-funded websites, such as Monster, CareerBuilder, and others. Although the specific links provided varied across the thirteen sites, in each there was an icon on the computers in the resource room that enabled individuals to link directly with these alternative job listing websites. Although there was no consensus across sites, nor even within them, in general staff thought that providing customers with as many resources as possible was better than limiting their options in any way. In this way, customers could try the various websites themselves and determine whether one was easier for them to navigate or provided better matches for their searches.

¹ A one-stop orientation also covers resource room policy and procedures, available workshops, social service programs, and additional WIA services. During the orientation, customers receive handouts with information on topics such as resume writing, interviewing skills, and local One-Stop Career Center directions, hours, and locations. Then, they briefly hear about WIA intensive/training services and how to make an appointment with a counselor for more intensive services.

**Exhibit IX-4:
Primary (State-Developed) Websites Used for Job Listings**

	One-Stop(s)	Basic Functions
CalJOBS	Oakland Riverside Sacramento ²	A customer can search, categorize and save job postings in the state.
CWDS	Philadelphia	A customer can create a resume based on one of three template résumés in the system – experience, skill, or education. Customers can use the module, “Browse for Jobs,” to search and save jobs for later viewing. When viewing or when they are ready to apply, the customer can click “Apply Now,” which sends their resume to the employer on file.
Connecting Colorado (CC)	Colorado	A job seeker can enter her/his skills and qualifications. The database creates job matches based on these skills and sends an email to the job seeker and employer when skill matches are found.
JobZone	Oyster Bay	A job seeker can conduct an online job search. The system provides information on 900 occupations matched with the latest labor market information from the NY Department of Labor.
Georgia Career Information System	Fulton	A customer can use the job match function, access tools to conduct skills assessment or the ETPL, set up a portfolio and learn tips for interviewing.
Go2WorkSource	Olympic	A job seeker can job search and match, build and post a resume, and access labor market information.
SConestop.com	South Carolina	A job seeker can conduct a job search, use a resume builder, access information on educational providers, financial aid training, the labor market, and upcoming career center events.
Work In Texas	Brazos Valley South Plains	A customer can job match (even when he or she is not logged on). The system generates notices to alert them to potential job opportunities. Customers can browse thousands of job postings including all state agency jobs, refer themselves to open positions, complete résumés and/or state applications and maintain them online.

² Although Alameda and Richmond customers use CalJOBS, One-Stop staff mentioned that CalJOBS was not the most used job-matching tool.

Even though each of the centers in the sample offers customers online job listings as a self service, all also provide at least some listings in hard-copy as well. Offering customers tools in print form enables job seekers who are not comfortable performing a job match via the Internet the option to access job listings in a more traditional way. Although centers typically focus on engaging the customer in searches using web-based tools, the centers in our sample offered numerous other means of accessing available jobs, as described below.

- **Job Flyers.** At the Richmond site, staff place flyers in plastic holders on lobby walls, allowing customers to access local community job announcements. There are roughly 20 sleeves with ample copies made of each job announcement. During the site visit, job listings for commercial driver, care assistant, contract worker, cleaning laborer, and tutor were noted.
- **Handouts with Website URLs.** Many of the centers created handouts highlighting popular job search and match websites. For example, in Olympic, Washington, customers receive a printed list of about 50 job search sites, including city, county and state job websites. At Brazos Valley, Texas, staff provide job seekers with a list of websites entitled “Most Wanted Internet Sites” that identifies 20 different job search websites, which include Craigslist, Monster, Indeed, CareerBuilder, and Jobing. In some centers, customers receive these copies during the initial orientation. At other centers, these handouts are available near the resource room computers.
- **Job Binder and Job Board Postings.** In all One Stop Career Centers, self-service customers have access to job listing binders or job board postings that they can use as an alternative to searching for jobs online. While all centers offered this resource, centers typically varied on the quality of jobs, hourly wage/salary, posting date, field or sector, and quantity of listings. Nearly every site visited affirmed that the job search binders were popular among both frequent self-service computer users and nonusers. Several sites whose customers used job list binders often updated postings and typically included jobs from a variety of occupational fields.

Challenges in Using Job Listings

Several of the centers in our sample rely on their state online job matching systems as central components of their service-delivery systems. However, a number of customers interviewed during our site visits indicated that the state websites they used fell short of expectations in several ways. Most tellingly, these job seekers stated that they experienced a higher employer response rate and had greater success obtaining jobs when they used alternative job matching websites, job boards, or job listing binders. Some of these customers also complained about the difficulty in using the state job websites. The key concerns customers (as well as several staff) voiced in using state-developed job listing sites are identified below.

Difficulty of navigation. For customers with low levels of computer literacy, accessing state job listings online was difficult. For this reason, these customers used online resources less often.

Staff at five centers in the study mentioned that they similarly struggled with navigating through web pages and inputting information into correct fields. Further, completing most steps, including creating a profile or conducting a job search, was time-consuming and quite complex, especially for individuals who are novice computer users. The site visitor in Philadelphia had significant difficulty in navigating the state-run website, noting that simply logging in required multiple steps, substantial data collection, and a significant amount of time. Similarly, customers in Riverside indicated that CalJobs was quite difficult to navigate and thus found it less useful than other job listing websites.

Poor job-matching functionality. Several staff complained that the state job-matching system missed potential clients because of the variability of word use for skills and position titles. For example, if employers enter Welder as the desired employment position and a customer inputs Metal Engineer or Tradesman on his or her resume, there will not be a match despite the fact that the individual may be well qualified for the position. Staff and customers in Texas, especially, noted that the job matching component of the state system was very picky, and was unlikely to return a match unless an individual's skills were an exact match to a particular listing. Consequently, such issues often required staff intervention to ensure customers obtain information on opportunities that are a good match for their skills and experience. Staff in the California sites similarly noted that the CalJOBS system had very limited job matching functionality. Thus, these sites felt that job matching was severely lacking in the state system.

Low user success rate. At least three sites found the success rate for job matches using the state system to be low. Some of this could be attributable to incomplete or inaccurate completion of application fields by low literacy customers. But staff felt that the systems themselves were not comprehensive in their ability to match job-seekers with available jobs that matched their skills. Another reason for a low success rate may have been that some state-developed websites targeted certain fields and skill levels that were a poor overall match to the skills of those accessing the listings. Of course, this is one purpose of the job matching function – to limit the matches to those who are well qualified for the available employment. Nevertheless, it is of concern if there is a general mismatch between the types of jobs that are included in the state job listing system and the types of job-seekers using that system. Finally, at least four sites mentioned that customers occasionally provide incomplete online applications or do not enter the information into the correct fields, which results in a low response rate from employers. Though again this may be viewed as a reasonable result of the job matching process, if the computer literacy levels of job-seekers are insufficient to the requirements for job matching, it is also perhaps a reflection on the requirements themselves.

Onerous requirements. In some sites, the state job listing system had relatively onerous requirements for customers before they could fully access the listings or other services available

through the website. As an example, CalJobs requires that customers post their resume to the site before they can access job listings. South Carolina staff and customers complained that they needed to complete multiple fields of data before they could use the system to search for available jobs. Often, customers complained, any slight error in data entry would prevent them from being able to access the system. Similarly, as described above, the CWDS in Philadelphia, required users to navigate multiple screens, many of which were somewhat confusing or vague, before granting access to job listings.

Each of the challenges described above can be met to some degree by providing some level of staff assistance in the job listing and matching process. Even though all centers provide orientations and introductory training on the state-developed systems, staff found that many customers still need some level of staff assistance when they use the systems. Often as a result of these challenges, customers preferred other job-match and list websites to the state-developed system. Craigslist reigned as the most popular public access job-matching website across almost every center in the sample, with other notable websites used including Monster, Hot Jobs, CareerBuilder, Indeed Simply Hired, and Jobing.

Training in Job-search Skills

Strong job search skills are crucial for customers looking to obtain employment: job seekers are far better situated to find and secure employment if they are aware of and can enact basic strategies for searching for suitable employment. This is especially true in a self-service context, as the onus is on job-seekers themselves to conduct the search. Therefore, One-Stop Career Centers generally offer a variety of hard-copy materials—including books, pamphlets, and instructional guides—computer software, audio/visual materials, and workshops to help customers conduct effective job searches.

Hard-Copy Materials. All One-Stop Career Centers offer dictionaries, thesauruses, and “How To” resume books. Centers with an updated and organized selection of books see frequent customer use of these library materials. For example, *Oyster Bay* offers a number of job search books in its resource room library, including up-to-date books on developing résumés and cover letters, strategies for job search, and tips for interviewing. Other centers offer similar types of books, though it is clear that some sites are more careful to regularly update these selections so that the materials are current and targeted to changes that have occurred in job searching in recent years (i.e., using Internet-based resources).

Also, One-Stop Career Centers make other hard-copy resources available to customers to help manage the job search process. Most of these materials walk clients through a step-by-step process of how to conduct a job search or develop a resume and cover letter. Exhibit IX-5 includes three examples of the types of hard-copy tools centers provide to customers.

Exhibit IX-5

Handouts and Worksheets on Improving Job Search Skills

- In *Trident*, staff make hard-copy job search planners available for customers to plan and track the job search progress, brainstorm ideal jobs, and calculate salary needs. A number of hard-copy resources are available, including information on non-verbal communication during interviews, managing the stress of job searching and family during times of unemployment, dressing for an interview, and writing follow-up thank-you notes to interviewers. Documents on special considerations for job applicants who are women, individuals re-entering the workforce after a long period of unemployment, older workers, minorities, ex-offenders, and people with disabilities are available for reference.
- *South Plains* posts state-sponsored job search flyers on the resource room walls, which provide customers with basic information on how to conduct quality job searches.
- *Oyster Bay* places sample copies of résumés in the resource room. Additionally, a number of pamphlets and one-page double-sided flyers related to developing résumés and cover letters are available on resource-room bookshelves. The One-Stop Career Center staff also developed a checklist that customers could use to assess their résumés.

Computer Software. The One Stop Career Centers make available software that can enhance customers' job search prospects, including most notably software that simplifies the process of writing a strong resume. This software may include state-developed resume-building templates, Microsoft Word resume templates, and the WinWay software package. Perhaps because of its automated features, which almost eliminate the need for typing, the WinWay package is the most popular of the resume-building tools across the sample sites. Nevertheless, the CWDS, used in Philadelphia, offers its own resume-building tools, and provides three separate templates for creating a resume online, including an experience template (best for those with significant work experience), a skills template (allowing job seekers to highlight their set of skills), and an education template (focused on educational experience and training). Notwithstanding this flexibility, some customers and staff complain that there is little way to further customize these resumes once created.

Audio/Visual Materials. Most self-service customers require at least some staff assistance when trying to create a resume or conduct a job search. Staff note that some clients will attend a workshop to gain expertise on how to access a job search website; others will attempt to follow instructions on a resource room handout; and still others will use a resume-software program or watch a video on improving job search skills. Many customers find audio/visual materials to be

especially helpful in learning about strategies for improving their job search skills. As a result, nearly all the One-Stop Career Centers in our sample provided such materials for customers' use. As one example, in Fulton, the resource room library carries a number of DVDs and VHS tapes that focus on job search strategies, which include the following:

- Interviewing: Getting Good Answers to Tough Interview Questions
- Getting a Job Using Traditional Methods
- Getting to Know What an Employer Wants
- Getting and Using Your Resume, Cover Letter, Portfolio
- Getting Job Leads From the Internet and Telephone
- Getting a Job Using Non-Traditional Methods
- Making Decisions and Being Assertive
- From Pink Slip to Pay Check: The Road to Reemployment
- Social Skills at Work: Keys to Success

Other sites offered similar resources, though the number of options and the extent to which they were recently produced varied across the sites. In many of the sites, the audio/visual materials were not prominently displayed within the resource room. In such instances, staff reported their use was much less frequent, and customers often were not aware that they were available. In two of the sites, the media center in which customers would use such materials shared space with staff meeting rooms. Hence, often the room was unavailable to customers. In these sites, too, the materials were less frequently used. Generally speaking, then, audio/visual materials were more likely to be used in cases in which they were up-to-date and prominently displayed, and a sufficient space was dedicated to their use.

Workshops. Apart from the publications and materials listed above, centers provide job seekers with workshop opportunities to enhance their job search skills and to transition to a self-directed job search. Staff at each of the centers in the sample reported that such workshops were among the most effective means for helping customers find suitable employment.

Centers generally provide an introductory orientation workshop that briefly covers job search tips and informs job seekers about other, in-depth job search workshops offered. These subsequent workshops typically focus on specific elements of the job search process, including developing a customized resume, writing cover letters, enhancing job search techniques, conducting mock interviews, and negotiating salary information, as well as a host of other topics geared towards their job search needs.

Exhibit IX-6 identifies some examples of the types of job search workshops offered by the centers in our sample. As the examples demonstrate, workshops represent a critical component

for self-service users in learning about job search strategies and strengthening their skills in this area. Overall, however, most One-Stop Centers offer the full array of tools and resources described in this section, enabling customers to enhance their job search skills using tools that are most appropriate or accessible to them. Thus, customers can pick and choose from the hard-copy materials, computer software, audio/visual materials, and workshops to gather information and strategies for improving their job search skills.

**Exhibit IX-6:
Examples of Job Search Workshops**

	Description/Topics	Length	Schedule
Brazos Valley	Job Search Assistance workshops focus on how to start looking for a job, including examining a customer’s own experiences and needs. From this, customers learn what areas they may need to strengthen to be competitive for employment.	2 hours	Once per week
Oakland	Separate components of the overall Job Search workshop focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing for your Job Search • Knock their Interviewing Socks Off • Résumés that Get Attention • Finding the Jobs • Getting and Keeping a Job 	4 hours per day	5-day workshop series
Olympic	Job Hunter Workshops are offered in seven different modules, and customers can identify those that would be most useful for them. Modules include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation and Job Search Preparation • Knowing Yourself • Skills and Abilities Analysis • The Job Market • Effective Job Search • Applications and Resumes • Interviewing 	3-3.5 hours per module	7 modules
Oyster Bay	Résumé writing workshops provide job seekers with an opportunity to learn more about developing a resume and tools for preparing one’s resume. Other workshops include “Marketing You!” and “Networking.”	2.5 hours	Multiple times per week

Exhibit IX-7 shows one example of a center that offers multiple mechanisms through which customers can enhance their job search techniques. As can be seen in this exhibit, customers can access numerous tools and resources, in a variety of formats. Often, they may initially access these services independently, but typically they eventually require at least some staff assistance. Although a customer might be able to sign up for a workshop unassisted, staff regularly help and coach customers during these seminars, thus blurring the fine line between what is considered a self-service and a staff-assisted service.

Exhibit IX-7

Linking Career Exploration and Job Search in Sacramento

The One Stop Career Centers in Sacramento provide a variety of tools to assist customers in their job search process. Sacramento offers a large number of workshops, including: *Customized Resume Preparation, Job Seeker Resources, How to Get a State Job, Job Search Tips and Strategies, What's Keeping You Down, Dress for Success, How to Interview When You Have Something to Hide, and The Interview 'Green Light' to Employment*, among others. The centers also provide a weekly seminar called *Job Talk*, in which a professional or human resource representative will present information concerning jobs in a particular occupation or industry, as well as what employers in that industry are seeking when they post employment openings.

In addition to available workshops, customers also have access to WinWay for creating resumes, and Microsoft tutorials for creating resumes and cover letters. Hard-copy materials are voluminous and include books on resume preparation, job search skills and strategies, effective interviewing, and choosing occupations. The centers also offer numerous flyers that describe the job search process, as well as how to strengthen one's resume or cover letter. Similar materials are available in DVD or VHS format.

While allowing customers to pick and choose which format works best for them, Sacramento approaches customer job search from a "tailored coaching" stance, indicating that most users require some staff assistance in their job search. Staff at both centers offer basic job counseling and career counseling from a one-on-one or group format. Career Center Job Coaches help customers to address employment barriers, and assess needs and potential, as well as set realistic goals. Career counseling also includes customized employment events, such as job fairs and seminars, to meet a specific group demand.

Other Tools and Resources

All One-Stop Career Centers also offer self-service customers general office resources such as telephones, printers, copy machines, fax machines, and VCRs and/or DVD players. In addition, several centers provide customers with a number of specialized resources designed to address the issues that hinder some customers with personal challenges from attaining employment. These resources focus on addressing barriers that impede customers from gainful employment, such as expunging a criminal background or obtaining government financial assistance. These resources can be offered in a number of ways, such as pamphlets, informational binders, one-page flyers, guide books, workshops, clubs and organizations, and referrals to outside vendors as a way to address customer challenges. Exhibit IX-8 identifies several specialized content areas in which One-Stop Career Centers had developed or made available tools for use by self-service customers.

**Exhibit IX-8:
Specialized Content Areas Among One-Stop Career Centers**

Center	Entrepreneur-ship	Prisoner Re-entry	Financial Literacy	Social Services	Older Workers
Alameda County	✓	✓		✓	✓
Boulder				✓	✓
Brazos Valley		✓	✓	✓	✓
Fulton		✓	✓	✓	✓
Oakland	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Olympic				✓	
Oyster Bay	✓			✓	
Philadelphia			✓	✓	
Richmond		✓	✓	✓	✓
Riverside		✓	✓	✓	✓
Sacramento	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
South Plains	✓		✓	✓	✓
Trident	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Centers typically tried to be responsive to their customer base by offering tools and resources that focused on the specific challenges or characteristics of their customers. For example, if a site had many customers who were mothers, then they offered a Women, Infants, and Children seminar on applying for government benefits for families. Similarly, the Oakland center, which serves a large population of re-entering offenders, sponsored a Department of Corrections Re-Entry liaison to spend time onsite. The Re-Entry Liaison works with offenders (and their families) re-entering the workforce after release from incarceration. The courts or parole agents usually refer clients to the Liaison, who can offer assistance with obtaining transitional housing, job referrals, reading and math tutoring, and information on apprenticeship, GED preparation, and substance abuse programs, and assist clients in obtaining a state ID/driver's license.

Further, although most One-Stop Career Centers cater resources to their target population, every site provided some level of social service resources and information that was outside the general scope of workforce preparation. Centers often were able to offer these resources as a result of developing partnerships with outside agencies, such as the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP).

Employer Self-Services

The discussion thus far in this chapter has focused on tools and resources available to job-seeker customers, who represent by far the most numerous customers of One-Stop Career Centers across the country. In recent years, however, centers have increasingly viewed the employer as a primary customer of services, and have worked to build relationships with employers in their communities in an effort to increase the number that regularly avail themselves of center services. In this section, we describe the self-service options for employers across all One-Stop Career Centers. As will be seen, however, many of the services described as self service in fact involve staff assistance, and in most sites staff insist that employers vastly prefer staff-assisted services.

The primary self-services that One-Stop Career Centers have developed or offer to their employer customers include:

- Access to a database of job seekers
- Labor market information
- Information on labor laws in their state or locality
- Conference room or office space for rent

Although these services are considered by most centers to be self-services, most admitted that they in fact require some form of staff assistance. For example, the Fulton center makes a space

at the center available for hiring fairs. However, most employers call in to consult with center staff regarding logistics, scheduling, and adequacy of resources. Staff might also have to intervene to set up furniture and office equipment. Thus, despite the fact that this is considered a self service, employers accessing it prefer the staff support and personal interaction when arranging such events. Similarly, though centers provide employers with access to a database of job-seekers, the vast majority of employers prefer not to access this database themselves but would rather that Career Center staff play a screening role by sifting through the database to find strong matches for an employment opening. Hence, this self-service, too, generally involves staff assistance.

Indeed, during the site visits, we learned that virtually all employer services tend to involve at least some staff assistance. As One-Stop Career Centers have learned this, in most cases these centers created business teams to manage and oversee the business or employer services component of the center. Most frequently (in 10 out of the 14 LWIAs in the sample), One-Stop Career Centers created two-person business teams. In these sites, one staff member spends most of his or her time in the field meeting with employers while the other works at the center conducting administrative tasks. In other centers, business services were comprised of a three (or more) person team that shared responsibilities between business services and other center services. Finally, in one site (Richmond), the business service “team” consisted of one staff person who initiated and developed a business outreach program through the facility.

The most frequently used “self service” among employers is to place job orders for online job matching. As a result, business services teams routinely will train employers on how to use this function during the first interaction. Despite providing this training in how to use these services, however, many centers noted that they prefer posting job orders for employers since so many of them incorrectly fill out the online forms. Issues typically include: incorrect wording of the advertisement; identifying inaccurate requirements for the position; and leaving fields missing or incomplete. Further, in most states, employer-entered jobs are not regularly purged from the state-developed system, while inactive staff-entered jobs are purged every 90 days.

Given the general lack of interest on the part of many employers, many One-Stop Career Centers do not even emphasize self-services to them, instead preferring to simply offer them staff assistance. Indeed, eleven LWIAs in the sample reported not emphasizing self-services to employers. In these sites, staff felt there were distinct advantages to focusing on staff assistance instead. Specifically, when business-services teams work directly with employers, it allows them to develop relationships and market services. Centers greatly value these relationships with employers because employers provide job leads and on-the-job training to customers.

Conclusion

Self-services were created largely to allow customers to direct their own job search efforts, by providing them with an array of tools and resources that would help them seek and obtain employment. Because there is a wide array of tools available, nearly all centers provide an initial orientation to these resources. But centers vary considerably in the level of effort they devote to orienting customers to using self-services. For example, although some centers provide printed guides for using self-service technologies, such as how and where to access job listings, labor market information, and resume making software, other centers provide customers with little, if any, relevant information. For centers at which ample staff assistance was available to provide a detailed orientation to the resources, customers expressed appreciation for the knowledge and information provided.

One-Stop Career Centers provide an array of publicly-funded and commercially-developed tools that focus on assessment and career planning, information concerning education and training opportunities, labor market information, pre-vocational skills, job listings and matching, and job search assistance, as well as some self-services designed to enable employers to access services independently (though employers rarely accessed services without significant staff assistance). And these tools and resources are offered in a wide variety of formats, including electronically, in hard-copy, and through workshops, confirming a finding from the local-area survey described in Chapter III. Most One-Stop Career Centers sought to provide a balance between hard-copy materials and electronic tools, but the actual use of online and computerized resources far outweighed that of print materials, even though customers often required staff assistance to navigate the electronic resources.

In general, across each of the primary areas in which tools and resources were offered electronically or online to customers, there were two primary challenges:

- Customers who *lacked basic computer literacy* required significant staff assistance to use or interpret the tools.
- *Too many* tools, web pages, and links *overwhelmed* customers in the job search process. Customers were not always sure about which tools were most appropriate to address their needs, and staff were not always available to provide clarity.

In addition to electronic offerings, customers had access to a wide array of hard-copy or audio/visual materials. However, the number of offerings, their quality, and the degree to which they were up-to-date varied markedly across the centers. In many centers, there were a large number of hard-copy materials, most of which were very current; in other sites, there were relatively few such materials, some of which were long out-of-date. Further, the locations of these materials were not always well marked, and thus customers were not always aware of their

existence as a resource. Customers in some centers were able to use hard-copy tools and resources more effectively than customers in other centers because those centers provided hard-copy tools characterized by the following:

- *High visibility* of audio/visual resources and other sources of hard-copy information included in the resource room library or other discrete areas of the One Stop Center
- *Clear and noticeable* handouts and posters with information on numerous service tools and up-to-date instruction on how to use these tools

Centers also routinely provided workshops on a variety of topics, enabling self-service customers an opportunity to interact with staff and gather information in still another format. These workshops were largely seen as valuable and informative, and were generally very well attended. Centers varied widely in the number of workshops available and the number of topics covered, but all sought to provide some workshops in an effort to reach customers who might need staff interaction and assistance to succeed in their job search efforts. For workshops to meet customers' needs, it was particularly important that they be offered at various times and on various days of the week so as to cater to job seekers' different schedules.

Across the wide variety of tools, resources, and formats of self-service information, at least two common strategies emerged as critical for being able to reach a wide number of customers and provide them with helpful information. This chapter detailed the critical importance of these two strategies:

- *Variability in self-service tools and formats.* Given the wide range of customers' skills and needs, the need for various formats and a wide range of self-service materials is integral to serving the universal customer. The range of customer computer literacy has widened considerably, as both those with extensive computer experience and those with none at all are utilizing One-Stop Career Centers. Thus, it is critical to offer an array of formats from which customers can obtain information.
- *Having knowledgeable and accessible staff.* The presence and ready availability of staff with knowledge about the range of tools and resources is critical, because even those individuals classified as self-service customers require some staff assistance. Hence, one cannot assume that so long as tools and resources are available, customers will be able to navigate them on their own. Rather, significant staff assistance is often necessary to help customers use and interpret the tools effectively.

Overall, then, One-Stop Career Centers provide a broad number of self service tools in a number of formats to customers with broadly varying skills and abilities. Though customers generally appreciate these tools, most can make full use of them only when staff are available to provide guidance and assistance.

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X. EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Given the limited amount of attention that staff are able to provide, how well do customers fare in obtaining employment and how satisfied are they with the services they receive? Put differently, how effectively can customers use One-Stop Career Center self-services to achieve their employment objectives?

This chapter first describes employment outcomes for self-service users drawn from UI wage matching that was conducted of self-service customers in three LWIAs in Texas and Pennsylvania.¹ It next presents findings from customer survey data for customers in these same three LWIAs and two others. In interpreting the findings, note that they cannot be construed as representing the impacts of self-services, since the study does not have a measure of what customers' outcomes would have been in the absence of their having used One-Stop Career Center services. Further, an indeterminate number of customers may have gone on to use WIA staff-assisted services, or services from another One-Stop Career Center partner, so these findings may not represent the outcomes associated with the use of self-services alone.

Employment Outcomes

Employment outcomes can be measured both from the matching with UI wage data, which took place for three LWIAs in two states, and the customer survey, carried out for self-service customers in five LWIAs. These results are described below.

Results Using UI Wage Data

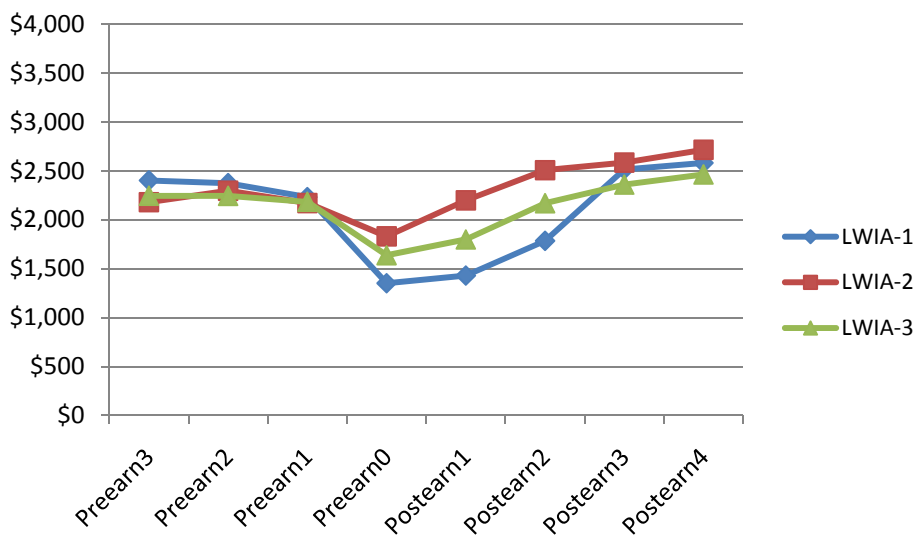
UI wage data provide the most rigorous estimate of the outcomes experienced by self-service users in the three LWIAs whose states conducted wage matching on the study's behalf. In using the state wage data, each customer's date of first use of services was noted and a wage history was created, covering the three calendar quarters prior to the quarter in which the customer used

¹ To mask the identity of the LWIAs, they are labeled as LWIA-1, LWIA-2, and LWIA-3 throughout this chapter.

services (denoted preearn3 to preearn1), the quarter in which the service occurred (denoted preearn0), and the four quarters after the quarter of service (denoted postearn1 to postearn4).²

Exhibit X-1 plots these trajectories as means for each LWIA. Consistent with the earnings dip that has long been noted among those seeking publicly funded workforce investment services,³ self-service customers see their earnings decline in the several quarters preceding their use of services. Earnings rebound steadily in the subsequent four quarters, surpassing pre-program levels by quarter two or three. This pattern repeats itself for customers in each of the three LWIAs that supplied data.

**Exhibit X-1:
Earnings Trajectory for Self-Service Customers in Three LWIAs**



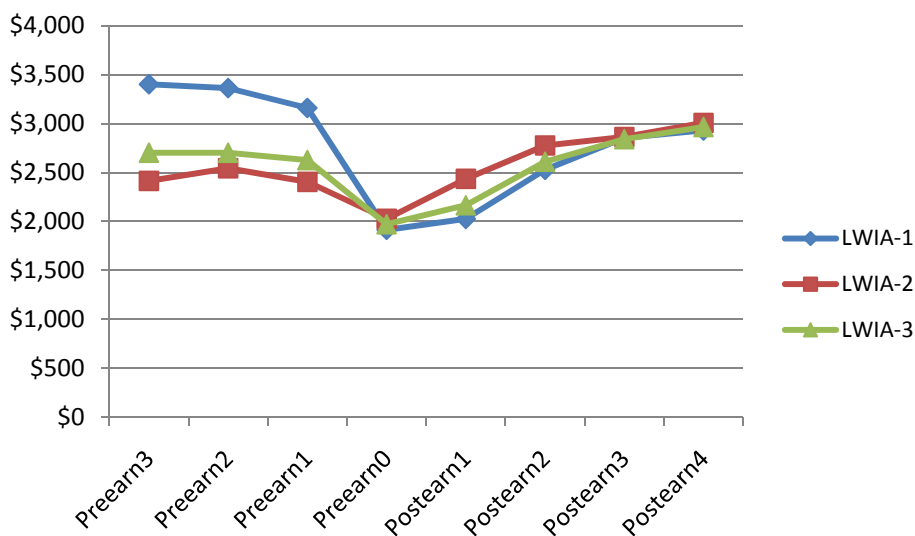
² The service usage file supplied by the LWIAs covered all those who used self-services anytime from January 1, 2006 to December 31, 2006, in the one Pennsylvania LWIA that supplied data, and anytime from September 1, 2004 to October 30, 2005 in the two Texas LWIAs. Operationally, the study team sent the states' UI agencies the SSNs of all self-service customers extracted from the usage files the LWIAs supplied. The states sent back all quarters of earnings for these individuals from the second quarter of 2005 through the second quarter of 2007, in Pennsylvania, and from the fourth quarter of 2002 through the second quarter of 2007, in Texas. Using the service usage files, the customer's first date of service receipt was determined, and the wage history covering the three calendar quarters before and four quarters after the quarter of service use was created. Note that customers could have accessed services some time before the service date used as the benchmark (i.e., during a period prior to the service usage extract the LWIAs provided), so that what is measured as pre-program earnings could be a period of service receipt for some. Similarly, services could have continued after this date, and, to the extent they do, post-service earnings are measured for a period when services may still be occurring. Sensitivity analyses were conducted to test for the implications of this possibility.

³ O. Ashenfelter, "Estimating the Effects of Training Programs on Earnings." *Review of Economics and Statistics* (1978; Vol 6, pp. 47-57).

One concern about the UI wage matching of SSNs derived from LWIA tracking systems is that many customers at registration supply a false SSN. To the extent this occurs, average earnings—whether measured pre-program or post-program—will appear artificially low, because those that did not supply a valid SSN will have no chance of showing earnings in the state’s UI wage system.

To test the prevalence of the problem of customers’ supplying false SSNs, and its impact for the earnings trajectories, the results in the preceding exhibit were rerun after including only those that appear with non-zero earnings at least once in the UI wage files the states provided.⁴ These results are displayed in Exhibit X-2 and show an earnings profile with a generally similar shape though with a somewhat more pronounced earnings dip.

**Exhibit X-2:
Earnings Trajectory for Self-Service Customers in Three LWIAs
After Excluding Those Not Appearing in the UI Wage File**



⁴ This represents nine quarters of earnings in Pennsylvania and 19 quarters of earnings in Texas. Note that customers are excluded only if they have no earnings in any quarter from among all the quarters of earnings the state supplied (even quarters prior to the third quarter pre-program or after the fourth quarter post-program). This represents 29.5 percent of all customers in the Pennsylvania LWIA and 9.8 percent and 17.0 percent in the two Texas LWIAs. The higher rate of exclusions in Pennsylvania is no doubt partly or largely caused by the fact that this state supplied only nine quarters of earnings data for each individual, while Texas supplied 19 quarters of data. However, these rates of exclusion suggest an upper bound on the extent to which customers supply false SSNs.

UI wage data were also used to proxy the calculation of the common measures. As defined by TEGL 17-05, these measures can be summarized as follows:

- *Entered Employment Rate (EER)*, calculated as the number employed anytime in the first quarter after the exit quarter divided by the number not employed on the date of program participation.
- *Retention Rate*, calculated as the number employed in both the second and third quarters after the exit quarter divided by the number employed in the first quarter after the exit quarter.
- *Average Earnings*, calculated as the sum of the earnings in second and third quarters after the exit quarter divided by the number employed in the first, second, and third quarters after the exit quarter.

The self-service tracking data, in conjunction with state UI wage data, allow these measures to be calculated, if only approximately.⁵ A major limitation is that the base of EER, as it is officially defined, excludes those employed when they first accessed workforce services, but no direct indicator of this is available. As a proxy, whether the customer is employed anytime in the calendar quarter when he or she first accessed services is used. The results for EER measured in this way are shown in the first column of Exhibit X-3, labeled ‘Not Employed in Service Qtr’ and shows that EER measured in this way ranges from about 29 percent to 37 percent for self-service customers.

As before, to weed out those self-services customers who supplied bogus SSNs, these tabulations were re-run after excluding those who did not show earnings in at least one quarter for any of the quarters of wage data the states supplied. Results after this exclusion, displayed in the exhibit’s next column, show that the estimated EER increases to between 36 and 42 percent, a jump of 5 to 10 percentage points in each LWIA.

By way of comparison, the third column in the exhibit shows the EER measured for WIA adult participants who received staff-assisted services and exited WIA during times comparable to when the self-service customers in these same LWIAs were accessing

⁵ In calculating these measures, each customer’s last use of services in the data extract provided by the LWIA was identified. Those whose last service date was less than 90 days before the last date covered by the data extract were excluded from the calculations, on the grounds that they could not be assumed to meet TEGL 17-05’s definition of an exiter. The numerator of EER represents those with positive earnings in the quarter after the calendar quarter during which their last service occurred, with the base restricted in various ways, as described in the text. Retention was calculated as those with positive earnings in both the second and third quarters after the quarter of last service, divided by those with positive earnings in the first quarter after the quarter of last service. Finally, average earnings was calculated as the sum of earnings in the second and third quarter after the quarter of last service, divided by those with positive earnings in the first three quarters after the quarter of last service.

services.⁶ Obviously, comparisons *across* LWIAs are not appropriate, since each one operates in a unique economic environment and serves a customer base with unique characteristics. But comparisons *within* each LWIA show that WIA performance on EER is considerably higher than it is for those receiving just self-services—at least 20 percentage points higher in one LWIA and nearly 50 percentage points higher in another.

But these comparisons are not quite fair. To proxy the restriction that EER, as it is officially measured, excludes from the base persons employed when they started receiving services, the tabulations for self-service customers surely over-correct, by excluding those who were employed *anytime* in the quarter they received services. Undoubtedly, this means that some customers who were not employed when they first accessed services but who got a job later within the same calendar quarter—arguably, the customers for whom self-services were most effective—are being excluded. To arrange for a fairer comparison, then, the final columns measure—both for self-service customers and WIA adult exiters—the percentage who were employed in the first quarter after their exit quarter, regardless of their employment status at intake.

**Exhibit X-3:
EER and Entered Employment in the Quarter after Exit for
Self-Services Customers and WIA Adult Exiters**

	EER			Employed in 1 st Quarter		
	Self-Service Customers		WIA Staff-Assisted	Self-Service Customers		
	Not Employed in Service Qtr	Excludes Zero Earners		All	Excludes Zero Earners	WIA Staff-Assisted
LWIA-1	28.5	38.4	85.8	51.0	58.2	87.8
LWIA-2	36.8	41.6	74.1	72.8	75.1	81.5
LWIA-3	29.7	36.2	56.9	62.0	66.7	67.0

These results show entered employment rates for self-service customers that are much closer to those for WIA exiters, at least in two of the three LWIAs. When self-service customers with non-zero earnings in at least one quarter are the focus, the gap narrows still further, to less than a percentage point in one LWIA, though in one LWIA the gap remains large. Thus, although it is

⁶ The WIA performance as calculated here does not quite adhere to the official definition of the common measures, in that the latter would take into account supplemental data for measuring EER and retention (but not average earnings) and would exclude some exiters who had received a global exclusion (that is, persons who were eliminated from the calculations due to a health or medical condition or some other extraordinary circumstance). To make the comparisons to those receiving self-services as comparable as possible, neither supplemental data nor global exclusions were used in measuring WIA performance in this exhibit, since they cannot be used in measuring the performance of self-service customers.

difficult with the data at hand to project what achievements self-service customers would attain on the EER common measure, it is clear that significant numbers do obtain employment, even if a gap between their achievement and that of WIA customers remains.

Next, Exhibit X-4 turns to the retention rate, which can be measured for self-service customers much more precisely.⁷ These results show a small but still noteworthy gap in performance between self-service customers and WIA adult exiters, amounting to between 5 and 12 percentage points. Thus, retention might be somewhat more problematic for self-service customers, but the difference between them and WIA participants is not dramatic.

**Exhibit X-4:
The Retention Rate for
Self-Service Customers and WIA Adult Exiters**

	<u>Self-Service Customers</u>	<u>WIA Adult Staff-Assisted</u>
LWIA-1	74.0	79.0
LWIA-2	77.7	89.3
LWIA-3	78.8	84.1

Finally, Exhibit X-5 shows similar results for the computation of the average earnings measure.⁸ Again, comparisons across LWIAs are not appropriate, due to the uniqueness of each LWIA’s economic context. But comparisons within LWIAs show that, for two of the three, the average earnings of self-service customers are considerably lower than they are for those who exited from WIA after receiving staff-assisted services, with average earnings 15 percent to 25 percent lower for the former group. The earnings distributions for these same two LWIAs show that self-service customers in both are substantially more likely to have low earnings and less likely to have high earnings. The third LWIA, identified as LWIA-3 in the chart, stands out as being different, in that the average earnings of self-service customers is higher than it is for their WIA counterparts, and the earnings distributions for the two groups are quite similar.

Overall, then, self-service customers demonstrate somewhat lower performance on the entered employment rate and the retention rate, and, for two of the three LWIAs being profiled, on

⁷ Following TEGL 17-05, the calculation of the retention rate includes in the base only those who were employed in the first quarter after the exit quarter. This can be measured for self-service customers from UI wage data. This restriction further serves to exclude those with bogus SSNs (i.e., who do not appear at least once in the UI wage file).

⁸ There is no need to explicitly weed out self-service customers with a bogus SSN because, as with the retention rate, the base for average earnings restricts the measurement of this outcome to those with positive earnings, and, hence, inclusion in the UI wage file.

average earnings as well.⁹ This implies that counting self-service customers in the calculation of the common measures for WIA can be expected to depress WIA performance at least somewhat.

**Exhibit X-5:
Average Earnings for Self-Service Customers and WIA Adult Exiters**

	<u>Self-Service Customers</u>	<u>WIA Adult Staff-Assisted</u>
LWIA-1		
Average Earnings	\$10,570	\$12,637
Distribution		
Less than \$5,000	20.6%	14.0%
\$5,000 to \$9,999	33.5	23.7
\$10,000 or more	45.9	62.3
LWIA-2		
Average Earnings	\$9,071	\$12,021
Distribution		
Less than \$5,000	27.8%	11.9%
\$5,000 to \$9,999	36.1	34.3
\$10,000 or more	36.1	53.7
LWIA-3		
Average Earnings	\$9,889	\$8,858
Distribution		
Less than \$5,000	24.2%	28.3%
\$5,000 to \$9,999	35.3	30.2
\$10,000 or more	40.5	41.5

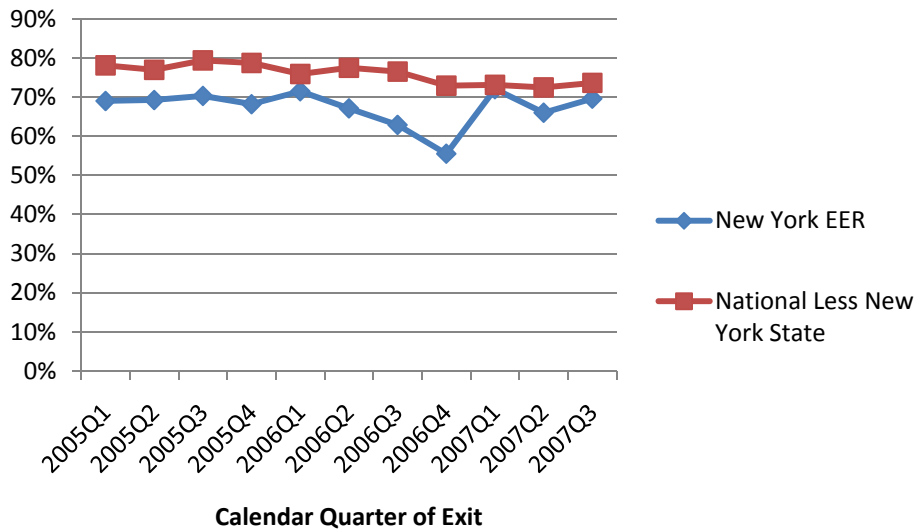
The experience of New York State provides additional evidence that resource room customers might depress common measures performance in the short-run, but also suggests that achieving high performance may nonetheless be possible. Recall from the discussion in Chapter II that this state adopted a functional alignment plan, which had the effect of causing nearly all Wagner-Peyser customers served at any of the state’s One-Stop Career Centers (most of whom could be classified as receiving self-services) to be co-enrolled in WIA. What effect did this policy change have on this state’s WIA performance?

Based on WIASRD data, Exhibit X-6 shows that this state’s performance on EER did take a significant dip at about the time the functional alignment plan was adopted, in early 2006. However, encouragingly, the state’s EER performance rebounded in subsequent quarters and

⁹ Note that the tabulations for self-service customers include those who eventually go on to receive WIA staff-assisted services, so the disparities in performance between those who receive only self-services and those who receive WIA staff-assisted services is actually somewhat larger than implied by these exhibits.

even came to surpass its earlier levels.¹⁰ By comparison, the EER performance in the rest of the nation remained nearly constant during the time plotted in the exhibit, suggesting that New York’s dip and then subsequent rebound in performance was not reflective of any national macroeconomic trends.

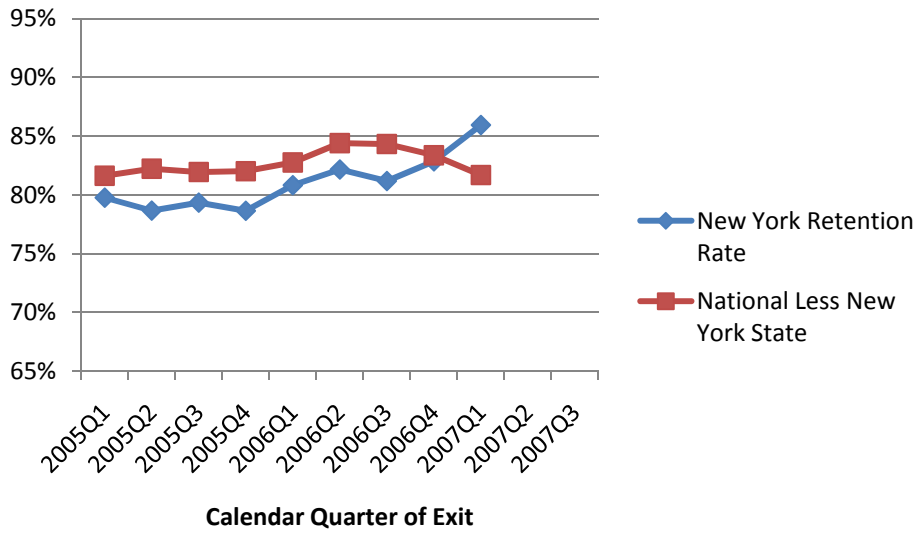
**Exhibit X-6:
EER: New York State and National (Less New York) Performance,
by Calendar Quarter of Exit**



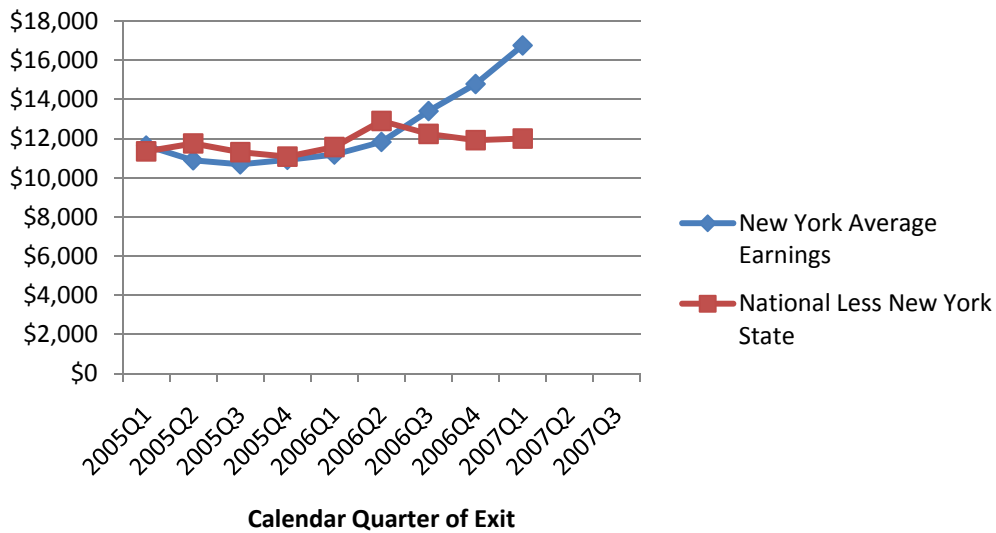
Results for the retention rate (presented in Exhibit X-7) and average earnings (Exhibit X-8) are even more encouraging from the standpoint of demonstrating that high performance is not necessarily incompatible with serving self-services customers. For both these outcomes, New York State shows no dip associated with the adoption of the functional alignment plan, and, in fact, its performance on both outcomes shows that a sharp upturn occurred in the quarters following the plan’s adoption.

¹⁰ The trend in the number of exiters in New York State reflects the effect of the functional alignment plan. From the first quarter of calendar year 2005 through the second quarter of 2006, the number of WIA exiters included in the base of EER fluctuated from 63,000 to 78,000. In the third quarter of 2006, just after the functional alignment plan was introduced (the state’s technical advisory announcing this plan, Technical Advisory 06-3, was issued in March, 2006), the number in the base of EER jumped to 45,727 and rose still further in subsequent quarters, reaching about 90,000. Another important state directive, Technical Advisory 08-4, required that virtually all One-Stop Career Center customers should receive an initial assessment, which, with Technical Advisory 06-3, would qualify them as having received WIA staff-assistance. This directive was not issued until June 2008. Therefore, the full effect of these two important policy dictums cannot be determined with the WIASRD data at hand.

**Exhibit X-7:
Retention Rate: New York State and National (Less New York) Performance,
by Calendar Quarter of Exit**



**Exhibit X-8:
Average Earnings: New York State and National (Less New York) Performance,
by Calendar Quarter of Exit**

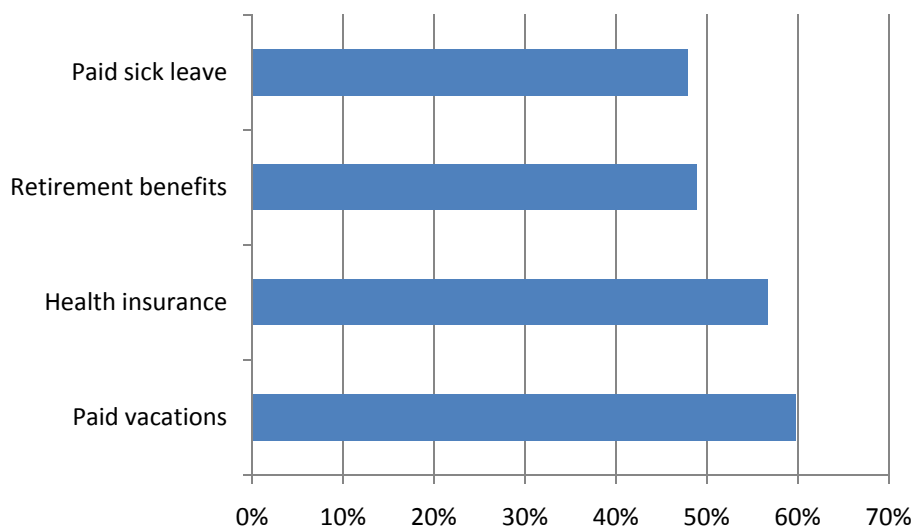


Employment Results from the Customer Survey

The customer survey provides additional information about the employment outcomes of self-service customers, and, in particular, the role they see that the One-Stop Career Center services played in helping them obtain a job.

The rate at which survey respondents are employed is broadly similar to the entered employment results presented earlier in this chapter, with about 52 percent reporting that they were employed at the time the survey was conducted. Those who were employed were asked which of several types of fringe benefits they receive. Exhibit X-9 shows that receipt of fringe benefits is not uncommon, with about 60 percent of those employed receiving paid vacations and health insurance, and about half receiving paid sick leave and retirement benefits.

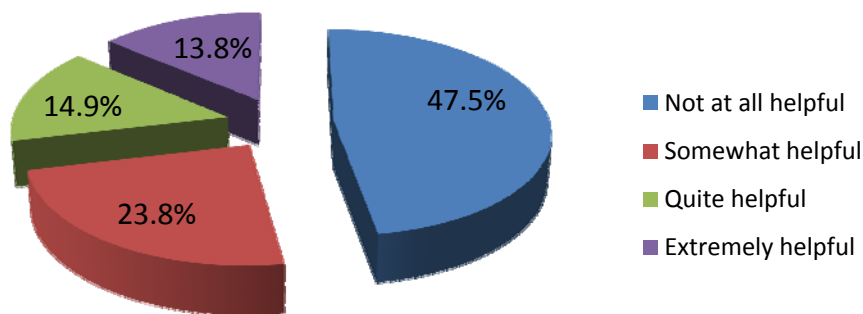
**Exhibit X-9:
Percentage of Those with a Job who Receive Fringe Benefits**



Respondents who started a new job were also asked how helpful the workforce center's services were in helping them get this job. As Exhibit X-10 shows, about 28 percent found the center's services either quite or extremely helpful to them in finding their new jobs. By contrast, 48 percent reported that the services were not at all helpful, and another 24 percent reported them as

only somewhat helpful.¹¹ These figures are remarkably constant across the five LWIAs whose self-service users were surveyed. Clearly, finding jobs for the workforce system’s customers represents a substantial challenge.

**Exhibit X-10:
How Helpful Were Workforce Services in Helping You Find Your Current Job
(Respondents are those with a job at the time of the survey)**



Satisfaction with Services

Chapter VII presented customers’ appraisals of the helpfulness of each of the specific services they accessed, such as for preparing a resume, learning about education and training providers, researching career options, and the like. The customer survey also asked general questions about customers’ assessment of the services they received, using the sequence of three questions that make up the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), with each coded on a scale ranging from 1 to 10:

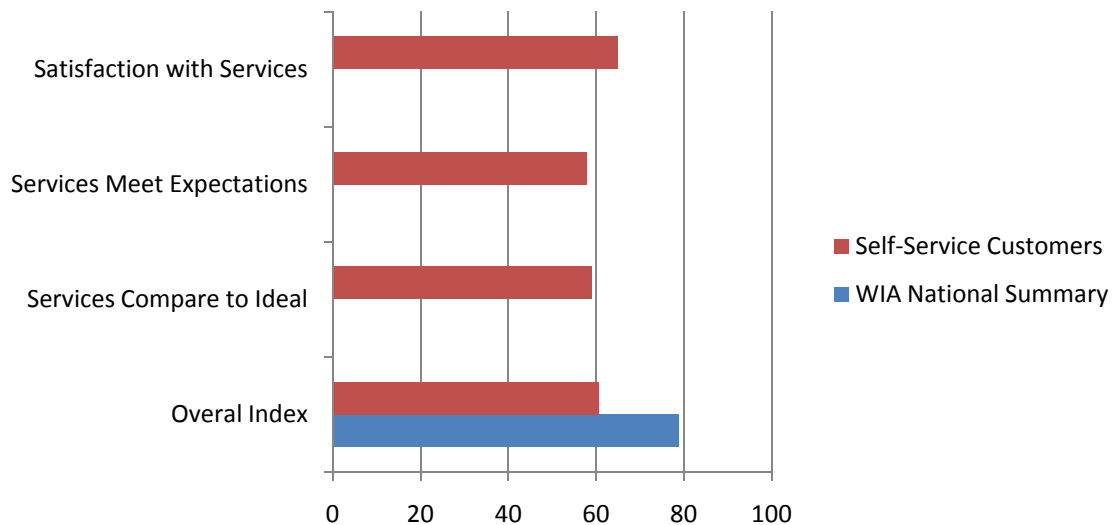
- What is your overall satisfaction with the workforce services? (A score of 1 denotes “very dissatisfied” and a score of 10 denotes “very satisfied.”)
- Considering all of the expectations you may have had about the workforce services, to what extent have the services met your expectations? (A score of 1 denotes “falls short of expectations” and a score of 10 denotes “exceeds expectations.”)

¹¹ Note that the survey was administered from 2005 to 2007 and thus at a time when the economy was much better than it is as this report is written (the current national unemployment rate is nearly 10 percent). On the one hand, this means that jobs were somewhat more plentiful than they are at present, and, hence, jobs were easier to obtain. On the other hand, self-service users at a time of general economic prosperity likely represent a pool of customers with greater barriers to employment.

- Now think of the ideal program for people in your circumstances. How well do you think the workforce services you received compare with the ideal set of services? (A score of 1 denotes “not close to ideal” and a score of 10 denotes “very close to ideal.”)

Using the guidance published in TEGL 1-07, each of the three items was individually recoded to represent a score on a scale of 0 to 100, and then the three were combined into a composite index using the TEGL’s formula weights for each state’s customers.¹² Results for each item, and the composite index, are displayed in Exhibit X-11, and suggest that, on a 100-point scale, customers’ appraisals are somewhat more favorable than neutral. The composite index shows a score of 60.7. In comparison, PY 06 results from the WIA National Summary for WIA participants show a score of 78.8.¹³

**Exhibit X-11:
ACSI Results for Self-Service Customers
in Comparison to the PY 06 WIA National Summary**



Conclusions

Overall, implications regarding the outcomes of self-service customers are mixed. On the one hand, UI wage matching conducted against the self-service tracking files submitted by three LWIAs suggests that self-service customers generally record somewhat lower outcomes on the

¹² Following the TEGL, each of the three items was transformed using the following formula: $(\text{raw score} - 1) / 9 * 100$. The overall index is then devised by weighting the three individual items using the aggregate weights reported in the TEGL. See TEGL 1-07, at: http://www.doleta.gov/performance/TEGL01-07_ACSI-Scores.pdf

¹³ The WIA results are only available for the aggregate index, and are posted on DOL’s website, at: <http://www.doleta.gov/performance/results/AnnualReports/annual-report-06.cfm>

common measures than do those who receive WIA staff-assisted services. Moreover, customers who obtain a job after they use services for the most part do not credit the services they accessed as having been helpful to them in finding the job, with only about half viewing the services as even somewhat helpful and the remaining half viewing them as not helpful at all. Finally, ACSI results from the customer survey show that customers' ratings are only somewhat more favorable than neutral, with customers giving a score of 65 (on a 100-point scale) regarding their satisfaction with services, 58 regarding whether their expectations were met, and 59 regarding whether the services match their ideal.

On the other hand, it seems equally true that a substantial number of customers are being helped to find employment, and some possibly considerably so, at least judging by their own evaluations of the services they received. Further, resource rooms arguably hold out the best hope for desperate job seekers who cannot access other, more intensive services. In the words of one customer, "Despite my objections or criticisms I may have about this place, without it I would not have any hope of finding anything. I would also have nowhere to go most days, and no purpose. This place is truly needed." Finally, New York State's experience since it adopted the functional alignment plan suggests that high performance on EER and the other common measures is not necessarily incompatible with serving large numbers of customers with light touch One-Stop Career Center services; thus, its experience clearly merits further scrutiny for the lessons it might hold.

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XI. CONCLUSIONS

One-Stop Career Centers provide an extraordinarily rich set of tools and resources to assist the self-service customer conduct a job search, prepare a resume, explore career opportunities, research the labor market and education and training providers, and enhance job seeking skills. Findings presented in this report show that LWIAs have taken steps to present a professional and inviting atmosphere to their self-service users and locate their centers strategically—e.g., in downtown centers and neighborhood hubs, with good access to public transportation. Furthermore, they facilitate access for customers with special needs, such as by making assistive technology available to customers with disabilities and, in some cases, translating materials into Spanish or other languages for customers with limited English proficiency.

The tools and informational resources themselves are remarkable for their richness and variety. Tools to help customers prepare a resume and assess their career interests and skills are available everywhere, as are informational resources about labor market trends and education and training providers. State ES job matching websites are of course always available, but many other job listing services are routinely bookmarked and are widely used. The Internet is the most common medium used for deploying these resources, facilitating access broadly and from diverse locations. At the same time, most One-Stop Career Centers also provide at least some hard-copy materials, which is helpful to customers who prefer to access information in this way. Workshops on selected topics are also commonly offered, providing customers with the opportunity to gain practical advice on how to hone their job search skills.

Findings show that staff assistance is critically important for most customers, who need at least an orientation to resource room services and, very often, at least some subsequent one-on-one help to have their questions answered. The staff who provide this assistance count as a significant strength of the resource rooms studied, as they demonstrate professionalism and dedication in the work they do.

Taken together, the One-Stop Career Centers' strategies to promote accessibility, the rich informational resources and tools available, and the availability of professionals to provide assistance ensure that high quality career development services are widely available to the universal customer throughout the nation. The rapid and full development of self-service

systems to this mature stage since the widespread adoption of the self-service concept in the One-Stop Career Center context a little more than a decade ago truly represents a remarkable accomplishment.

At the same time, One-Stop Career Center self-service systems are under some strain. The sheer volume of customers seeking services in the face of funding shortfalls that preclude a marked expansion of infrastructure represents a significant challenge in its own right. Additionally, many of the customers seeking on-site self-services have attributes that make it difficult for them to use the available resources and tools effectively on their own—many have weak literacy skills, limited English proficiency, and, very commonly, are uncomfortable with using computers. Given that so many of the resource room’s resources are only available electronically, the latter factor represents a significant concern. Of course, staff are available to provide assistance, but limits on the time they have to devote to any one customer mean that some users will continue to struggle and perhaps abandon their career development efforts altogether. Clearly, One-Stop Career Centers need to do much more to enhance the computer literacy skills of their customers for many of them to be able to access electronic resources effectively on their own.

To some degree, then, there is a mismatch between the philosophy behind self-services and the reality of the types of customers that resource rooms tend to attract. As one local-area administrator put it, “The people who really can do self-services aren’t coming here; they don’t use us. We see the people who have problems.” Key elements of this juxtaposition—the undeniable strengths of the One-Stop Career Center self-service system, coupled with limitations of many self-service customers to conduct an efficient job search using electronic resources on their own—are summarized in Exhibit XI-1.

The challenges of the self-service system notwithstanding, most customers achieve reasonably good employment outcomes after using self-services and express considerable appreciation for the help they received. For example, in the three LWIAs with applicable data, outcomes for self-service customers on the entered employment rate, the retention rate, and average earnings generally fall between 75 percent and 95 percent of the outcomes achieved by those who received WIA staff-assisted services from the adult program, and in some LWIAs their outcomes are even better. Furthermore, at least half of the customers who use a service rate it as quite or very helpful, and customers appreciate the resources and tools that resource rooms offer. As one customer put it, “Despite my objections or criticisms I may have about this place, without it I would not have any hope of finding anything. I would also have nowhere to go most days, and no purpose. This place is truly needed.”

**Exhibit XI-1:
Summary of Strengths and Areas for Improvement
in One-Stop Career Center Self-Services**

	Strengths	Areas for Improvement
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every LWIA has at least one comprehensive center and one-third of them have six or more physical access points • Centers are strategically sited to provide ready access to target populations • Services via the Internet are prevalent, facilitating access to services both onsite and remotely • Assistive technology is available for customers with disabilities • Customers rate access very favorably 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centers are crowded during peak times, when waiting lists often develop for computer use • Extended hours (evening or weekend hours) are uncommon, impairing access for those already employed but looking for a better job • Most staff are unfamiliar with use of assistive technology, forcing reliance on VR or DPN staff, who may not always be available • Access is impaired for customers who have limited English proficiency, low literacy skills, or are unfamiliar with using computers
Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff demonstrate professionalism and are dedicated to helping customers having problems • Staff with specialized expertise, such as VR or DPN staff, can be called upon when needed • Flexible staffing arrangements—such as use of on-call staff or temporary staff (e.g., SCSEP participants)—provide additional staff assistance while keeping resource room costs in check 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing shortages limit the amount of time staff can spend with the many customers who are struggling • Staff often feel stressed and overworked, leading to high staff turnover and burnout • High staff turnover and use of rotating or part-time staff mean that many staff lack high degrees of expertise • Bilingual staff and those trained to deal with customers suffering serious emotional distress are often lacking
Resources & Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A rich array of self-service informational tools and resources is available • Some tools are available in diverse formats (e.g., hard-copy, electronically, etc.), helpful for customers with diverse learning styles • Nearly all services are rated as quite or very helpful by at least half of the customers who use them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many services are only available electronically, posing a serious barrier for customers with limited computer experience • Access is difficult for customers with special needs, such as those with limited literacy or English proficiency • Services used most often receive the lowest ratings of helpfulness • The very richness of the tools available can be overwhelming for customers not always sure about which tools are most appropriate to address their needs • Customers' ratings of helpfulness using the ACSI are only somewhat more favorable than neutral

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APPENDIX A:
Customer Survey

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APPENDIX ON THE CUSTOMER SURVEYS

As part of the *Evaluation of One-Stop Self-Services*, randomly sampled customers were to be interviewed to learn about their reasons for accessing services, their satisfaction with the services they received, and the outcomes they obtained after their service usage. This appendix describes the process of administering the survey.

Background

We planned to interview customers from each of the nine LWIAs that provided individual-level data from their self-services tracking systems, but were able to do so for only five of them—three LWIAs provided their self-service tracking data too late to make it feasible to select customer samples and administer a survey in the project’s remaining period of performance, and one LWIA provided tracking data but only on the condition that it be stripped of personal identifiers, making the subsequent administration of a customer survey infeasible.

The five LWIAs that did provide tracking data did so at greatly different times; one group of two LWIAs (Group A) first provided data in early 2005, and a second group of three LWIAs (Group B) did so in the spring of 2006. Because we wanted to learn about customers’ experiences with using resource room services shortly after the service usage occurred, the customer surveys were therefore administered to the customers in the two groups of LWIAs at different times as well. The numbers released for interviewing from the first group of two LWIAs was 3,958 and from the second group of three LWIAs was 1,350.

The survey administration procedures followed a similar sequence for customers in each of the two groups of LWIAs. Sample members were first sent an advance letter alerting them that a survey would soon be arriving and eliciting their cooperation. Shortly thereafter, a hard-copy version of the survey was sent, along with a postage paid envelope for the respondent to use in returning the completed survey and an accompanying letter explaining the purposes of the data collection and providing a web link for completing the survey on line should the customer prefer that mode of administration. Reminder postcards were mailed to nonrespondents two weeks later, followed by a second copy of the survey two weeks after that to those who still had not

responded. Thereafter, the contact information for remaining nonrespondents was transmitted to one of SPR's two subcontractors, Decision Information Resources (DIR) and the Washington State University Social and Economic Sciences Research Center (SESRC), who were to attempt to complete the interview by phone, using Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) procedures. Phone interviews were conducted in English or Spanish, as necessary. Due to the project's budget constraints, no incentive payments were planned as an inducement to have respondents complete the survey, but some were offered midway through the survey process to boost response rates, as is described below.

Response Rates

Surveys of customers in the first group of LWIAs (Group A) were administered in 2005, beginning with a mail-out and followed by an attempt at telephone contact for nonrespondents. Returns from the mail administration of the survey were disappointing, with a response rate of only 18 percent, as Exhibit A-1 shows. The telephone survey contractor was able to complete the survey for only 11 percent of the nonrespondents, for an overall response rate of just 27 percent.

In light of the extremely disappointing response rates attained among customers from the Group A sample, SPR sought and obtained approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to offer a pre-paid incentive in the amount of \$2 to those in Group B. We considered the option of offering a much more sizable post-completion incentive, or a combination of pre- and post-payments (i.e., a small pre-payment followed by a larger payment upon return of a completed survey). However, the project's budget constraints precluded our offering any but the modest pre-paid incentive amount.¹

¹ There is some debate in the literature about the relative efficacy of pre-payments versus post-completion payments when used as incentives in mail or telephone surveys. Arguments in support of pre-payments are based on the theoretical foundation of social exchange theory, which posits that pre-payments establish the expectation of reciprocal exchange, and, hence, induce survey cooperation (D. Dillman, *Mail and Internet Surveys: The Tailored Design Method*, Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley, 2007). Further, a meta-analysis of the relevant literature concluded that pre-payments can be effective even when only incidental or token amounts are paid as incentives, and, in fact, can be just as effective as much more sizable post-completion incentive payments (E. Singer, R. Groves, and A. Corning, "Differential Incentives: Beliefs about Practices, Perceptions of Equity, and Effects on Survey Participation," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol. 63, 1999). However, the research is equivocal, as in other studies SPR and its partners have found that very sizable post-completion incentives are required to boost completion rates above 50 percent. For example, in SPR's *National Evaluation of the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program*, Mathematica Policy Research (MPR), SPR's survey contractor, administered a telephone survey of dislocated workers using three different payment schemes: (a) a \$25 post-payment only, (b) a \$2 pre-payment followed by a \$25 post-payment upon survey completion, and (c) a \$5 pre-payment and a \$20 post-payment upon survey completion. The second incentive scheme yielded the highest response rate, and the first scheme the lowest, demonstrating the efficacy of pre-payments. However, none of the three schemes yielded a response rate above 45 percent, so SPR and MPR obtained OMB approval to use \$50 and \$75 post-payments for some groups, and their use boosted response rates to about 60 percent.

The response rates were much higher among those in Group B, with 31 percent completing by mail (as opposed to 18 percent for Group A) and another 18 percent completing by phone, for an overall response rate of just under 50 percent. Potentially, some or all of the improvement could be due to the use of the pre-payments, but alternative explanations cannot be ruled out. For example, locating information provided by LWIAs in Group B might have been much more reliable than the locating information provided by LWIAs in Group A. In fact, an inability to locate respondents was much more likely to be given as the disposition code for Group A survey members, suggesting that contact information for customers in Group A’s LWIAs was more deficient. At the same time, the lower rate of refusals and the lower prevalence of encountering unavailable respondents in Group B suggest that the pre-payments were at least somewhat effective.

**Exhibit A-1:
Response Rates for Two Groups of LWIAs**

	Group A		Group B	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total mail-out	3,958	100.0%	1,350	100.0%
Total completes	1,061	26.8	652	48.3
Completed by mail or web	711	18.0	416	30.8
Completed by phone	350	8.8	236	17.5
Nonrespondents	2,897	73.2	698	51.7
Cannot locate	1,548	39.1	390	28.9
Unavailable/answering machine	416	10.5	223	16.5
Refusals/unable to complete	534	13.5	84	6.2
Deceased	0	0.0	1	0.1

Regardless of which group is considered, a primary reason for non-response seems to be that the contact information provided by the LWIAs was erroneous or out of date. Social Security Numbers (SSNs), also provided in the data extracts provided by the LWIAs, were used by both of SPR’s survey contractors in an attempt to locate survey members when the contact information the LWIAs provided proved to be in error, but these SSNs in many cases were believed to be bogus. Outright refusals, by contrast, were relatively uncommon as a reason for survey non-response.