

Making a Difference

Through Strategic Business Partnerships:

A Guide for Faith-Based and Community Organizations



Message from Elaine L. Chao, Secretary of Labor

“In this booklet, you will find valuable information to help you better understand the business community and local workforce needs and how to establish effective partnerships with local employers.

Faith-based and community organizations (FBCO) bring unique assets to the task of assisting individuals looking for training and employment. This is particularly true with hard-to-serve populations who often need long-term, in-depth assistance to find and retain jobs. Research conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor has shown that people with multiple barriers to employment (immigrants, welfare-to-work populations, the disabled, ex-offenders and others) need the kind of effective, holistic care offered by FBCOs.



Training and support services, however, are only part of the employment equation. FBCOs working with hard-to-serve populations also need expertise in understanding the needs of businesses and shaping their programs to support those needs. *Making a Difference Through Strategic Business Partnerships* is designed to help FBCOs become “business-smart” as they design and implement training, employment and support programs that are aligned with existing and future employment opportunities in their communities.

We are very proud of the work that the Department of Labor and its Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives have done to empower faith-based and community organizations in meeting the employment needs of their communities. I congratulate you on your interest in learning more about how to form effective partnerships with employers in your community. Working together, we can make a real difference in bringing hope and expanding opportunity for all people.”

Elaine L. Chao, Secretary of Labor



Introduction

In order to provide jobseekers with effective training and support, service providers, workforce development professionals, and local and state government simultaneously must seek to understand and respond to the needs of local businesses.

The nation's Workforce Investment System and One-Stop Career Centers are designed to meet the needs of employers and jobseekers throughout the country. The Workforce System is "demand-driven" and led by businesses that invest funding in programs and services to prepare and support people in obtaining and retaining jobs. Within that system, local workforce investment boards create

policies to respond both to individuals' needs for training and local businesses' needs for workers. Also, within the Workforce System, One-Stop Career Centers host numerous local, state, and federal employment and training programs and services.

The U.S. Department of Labor encourages faith-based and community organizations that are providing job training or supportive services (e.g. childcare, clothing, transportation) to collaborate with the One-Stop Career Center System. For more information about opportunities to partner with the local One-Stop System, please visit our website: www.dol.gov/cfbci.

In addition to working with your local One-Stop to assist individuals in their search for training and employment, it may be appropriate to create relationships directly with employers or joint partnerships with employers and the One-Stop System.

This document will prepare you to understand the challenges businesses face in the 21st century, how you can work with businesses to help place individuals in employment, and how you can make your services relevant to businesses in financial and non-financial partnerships.

“We’ve got to be ready to “help willing workers find jobs” and build “relevant skills for the 21st Century.” At the Department of Labor, we’ve compressed that mission into a formula we’re calling E-cubed. That’s employment, education and economic development - with the power of each of those “E’s” multiplied against the others to produce the kind of individual advancement that equals progress for the nation as a whole.”¹

THE HONORABLE EMILY DEROCCO, ASSISTANT SECRETARY
FOR THE EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION

¹ Opening Plenary Session, Workforce Innovations 2004, Washington, DC



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Key Forces Shaping Work and the Workforce

Worker Shortages

Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that the United States is facing a growing gap between the number of jobs and the available workforce. By 2010, there will only be 158 million people in the labor force to fill an estimated 168 million jobs in the economy.² This gap will be a result of new job creation as well as worker retirement.

And the situation could potentially be much worse: Over the next 30 years, 76 million baby boomers will retire, while there will only be 46 million new workers from Generations X and Y entering the labor force.⁴

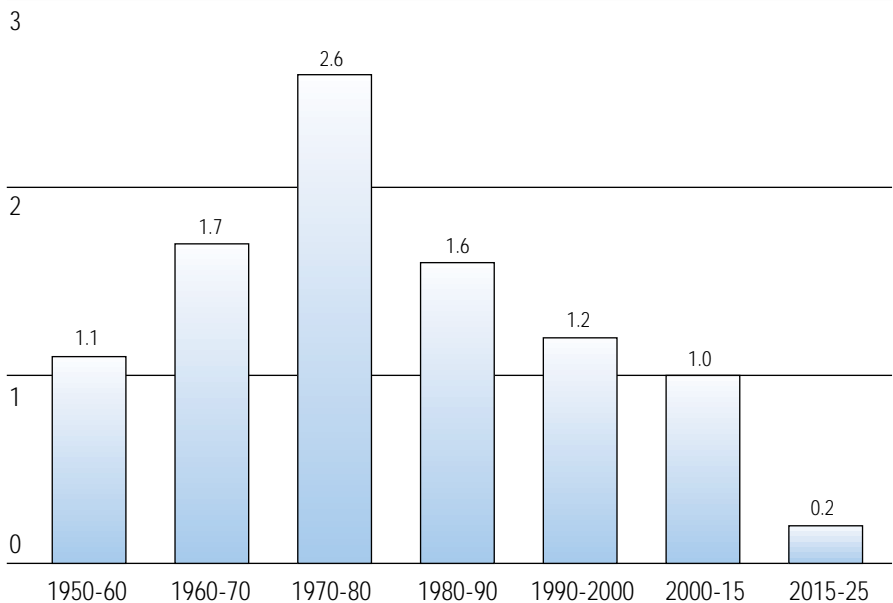
Employers faced with a dwindling workforce will need to reach out to populations that have traditionally been underutilized in the past including welfare recipients, the chronically unemployed, individuals with disabilities, older workers, immigrants, ex-offenders, and those without previous work experience.

For example:

- At the end of 2002, there were five million individuals receiving public assistance.⁵

Growth in the U.S. Labor Force³

Annual Growth Rates (Percent)



- In each of the next three years, state, local and federal correctional institutions will release over 600,000 men and women most of whom will need some type of employment to become productive members of society.⁶
- There are nearly 30 million working-age individuals with some type of disability, approximately half of whom are not working.⁷
- By 2010, there will be 28 million people in the United States

“By 2010, there will only be 158 million people in the labor force to fill an estimated 168 million jobs in the economy.”

between the ages of 65 and 79 – well into retirement age, yet still capable of positive contributions in the workplace. This number will grow to nearly 52 million by 2030.⁸

² Bureau of Labor Statistics, “BLS Releases 2000-2010 Employment Projections,” Washington, D.C., December, 2001.

³ Aspen Institute, Domestic Strategy Group, “Grow Faster Together, or Grow Slowly Apart,” Washington, D.C., 2002.

⁴ U.S. Department of Labor, “Training and Employment Information Notice No. 12-00, 2001 and calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau population projections.

⁵ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, news release, “HHS Announces Sixth Straight Year of Declines in Welfare Caseloads,” Washington, D.C., February, 2003.

⁶ U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, “Reentry Trends in the United States,” August, 2003.

⁷ John M. McNeil, U.S. Bureau of the Census, “Employment, Earnings and Disability,” paper prepared for the 75th Annual Conference of the Western Economic Association International, July, 2000, Vancouver, B.C.

⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, “Projections of the Total Resident Population, 1999 to 2100,” Washington, D.C., www.census.gov/population/www/projections/natsum.html.



Knowledge and Abilities

The knowledge, skills, and abilities required by many of today's jobs are vastly different than those required for jobs that existed just 20 years ago. Many growth industries, like health care and high-tech manufacturing, have a very difficult time finding qualified employees to meet their needs. Due to continued expansion and growth in these industries, filling positions with qualified candidates will only become more difficult. Additionally, employers in trades, such as electrical and specialty manufacturing, are concerned that their skilled employees are retiring with no younger, trained individuals to take their place.



“Finding skilled labor out there is virtually impossible to do anymore. Even with unemployment the way it is, it's hard to find maintenance technicians that can troubleshoot, tear things down, put things back together and those sort of things.”⁹

Work-Related Skills

Employers consistently report dissatisfaction with many of the job candidates they see, particularly those for entry-level positions. They feel such individuals lack employability skills and a positive, appropriate attitude toward work.

Specifically, what employers want in their employees are:

- Positive work habits, such as the ability to perform tasks assigned and see them through to completion.
- Work ethics, such as a willingness to show up for work every day, on time, as well as a commitment to long-term employment.

- Appropriate workplace behavior.
- Effective communication skills and courtesy in dealing with supervisors, co-workers, and customers.
- A sense of personal responsibility encompassing self-discipline and self-confidence which involves learning from experience and being able to accept criticism without feeling resentful or insulted.
- Ability to work both on a team and independently.



What Workers Want

A common misconception is that the only thing people want out of work is money. Many surveys in recent years indicate otherwise. The results of one such survey, conducted by Rainmaker Thinking, indicate the following among the benefits employees want from their work experience:¹⁰

- Flexibility, in such things as schedules, work locations, work requirements, and career paths.
- On-going opportunities to improve skills and abilities that allow employees to become more marketable both within and outside the company.
- Challenging, meaningful work that makes the job enjoyable.
- The chance to show proof of ability and value through such mechanisms as portfolios of accomplishments, authorship of work, and written letters of commendation and recommendation.
- Increasing job responsibility leading to the potential for advancement.
- Access to decision makers within the company.

- Performance-based compensation and benefits that recognize individuals for their personal and team-based contributions.
- Coaching-style managers who believe in and support personal and professional development to the benefit of both the employer and the employee.

What Businesses Need

Employers asked about the ideal system for fulfilling their workforce development requirements describe a business model that can meet their needs quickly and efficiently with services tailored specifically to them. When they consider

engaging an outside source to help, businesses describe a third party that is responsive, can follow through, and gives a sense that agency staff care about both them and the employees they place.

At the core, an employer needs qualified and motivated employees who can contribute to the organization's mission in an effective and efficient manner. Finding and keeping such employees can be a costly proposition for many businesses. Turnover costs – estimated to be anywhere from 33% to 250% of annual pay — are one area where workforce development assistance can have a positive impact.

“I think for me the issues are cost, quality and speed. If somebody can do anything to impact on any of those things, I'd be all for it.”¹¹

¹⁰ Carolyn Martin, Ph.D., Rainmaker Thinking, presentation at the “2002 Workforce Academy,” Clackamas, OR.

¹¹ Employer comment, Customer Needs and Expectations Regarding the Workforce Development System, Washington, D.C., 2003, page 79



Costs are incurred in time spent screening applications as well as interviewing and testing candidates. Employers may receive an overwhelming of resumes in response to job advertisements in the newspaper and through the Internet. When the economy is poor and jobs are scarce, businesses find their pool of applicants, particularly for jobs

Employers interviewed through U.S. Department of Labor focus groups concerning “Customer Needs and Expectations” said they received from 100 to 400 submissions for almost every advertised job, with only 10% from qualified applicants.¹³



paying more than minimum wage, includes many who do not meet the advertised position requirements. Businesses waste a great deal of time and resources screening through non-relevant submissions.

Additionally, businesses cite the expensive time and resources it takes to train a new employee only to have him/her quit shortly after being hired. They then have to repeat the advertising, screening, hiring and training processes expending yet more time and money.

All told, the cost of turnover for a \$15,000 per year (\$7.50 per hour) job may be anywhere from \$5,000 to \$37,000.¹²

¹² Richard Finnegan, Senior Vice President, TalentKeepers, presentations at “Workforce Academies of Learning,” Orlando, FL, 1999-2000.

¹³ Customer Needs and Expectations Regarding the Workforce Development System, Washington, D.C., 2003, page 64.

How Your Organization Can Meet Workforce Needs

Many community and faith-based organizations already work with the clientele businesses need, or offer services employers want. Employers and workers appreciate the expertise FBCOs offer in continued support services. This is critical as individuals transition into the world of work.

Here are some examples of FBCOs successfully working with businesses on issues of workforce development.

- **The Jobs Partnership** in Raleigh, North Carolina began as a close collaboration between a pastor and a businessman. The owner of a construction company found he had to turn away business deals because he could not find enough qualified workers, while the pastor had congregants desperate for work.



Together these two developed a program that is now replicated in at least 27 cities across the United States. It has placed over 1,500 individuals in well-paid employment and reports an over 80% retention rate for graduates remaining on the job.¹⁴

The Jobs Partnership is built around relationships. Churches refer candidates into the program and then agree to mentor them for as long as it takes to finish training, secure job placement and assure their success in the work environment. Participating businesses agree to list their openings with Jobs Partnership organizations and appoint a “job buddy” to assist the new hire’s adjustment in the workplace.

- **Jobs and More** in Springfield, Ohio offers 40 hours (ten separate workshop topics) of soft skills training covering such topics as goal setting, time management, anger control, interview preparation and self-esteem. Graduate “achievers,” equipped with resumes and interview clothes, are ready for placement assistance. Mentoring outside and inside the workplace and a large referral network help make the program a success.¹⁶

“Unlike any time in recent history, employers are reaching out to poor, unskilled workers, many of whom face multiple barriers to employment.”¹⁵

- **Ready4Work**, a pilot program sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor, is a partnership that assists ex-offenders as they find their way in the world of work while meeting the needs of businesses for job-ready employees. Local government, religious leaders, businesses, nonprofit organizations and the criminal justice system work together to prepare and place ex-offenders in productive employment. The program uses training, mentoring and encouragement to place and keep ex-prisoners on the job, help reduce crime, avoid recidivism and strengthen the community as a whole.¹⁷

¹⁴ Amy L. Sherman, Ph.D., *Collaborating for Employment Among the Poor: The Jobs Partnership Model*, The Hudson Institute, Indianapolis, IN, 2001.

¹⁵ Ryan Streeter, “Reaching Out to Workers ‘Left Behind.’” *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 2, 2000

¹⁶ Joyce Burger and Bea Smith, *Jobs and More*, Springfield, OH, Interview: September 3, 2003.

¹⁷ U.S. Department of Labor, Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, “Ready4Work Program,” informational brochure, <http://www.dol.gov/cfbci/ready4work.pdf>.



- **Resources** in Brooklyn, New York helps immigrants with little English-speaking ability and no work experience to become literate and acquire self-sufficient employment. Candidates receive language and employability training and apprenticeship before being placed in a program-generated business to learn on-the-job skills that can lead to outside employment. Highly motivated participants are encouraged to start their own small businesses.¹⁸

Here are a few things your organization may do to help meet workforce development needs:

- Make individuals employment-ready by offering soft skills training on topics such as the value of work, familiarity with the workplace environment, appropriate workplace behavior, resume writing and interview techniques.
- Collect, process and screen job applicants, and refer individuals who are good matches to business according to their needs.
- Offer motivation and encouragement to help those placed in jobs succeed.

“I know before I get a candidate that candidate has been able to follow directions, they’re able to respect authority.”¹⁹

- Monitor and follow up with job placements to ensure both employers and employees are satisfied with the working relationship.
- Help those placed into jobs with life and family issues that might interfere with their workplace success, such as childcare and transportation.
- Refer employees to assistance sources for those who need more help to remain employed.
- Develop a specialized training program, in conjunction with specific employers, to meet the need for skilled workers.

In summary, what your organization has to offer is a guarantee of a good match between employers

and prospective employees as well as ongoing assistance to ensure the match is successful.

What to Know When Approaching Businesses

Your organization already may know how to partner with others in the community, including government agencies, community-based organizations, and religious institutions. But working with businesses requires a different approach. Here are some things to consider in setting up a relationship with local businesses.

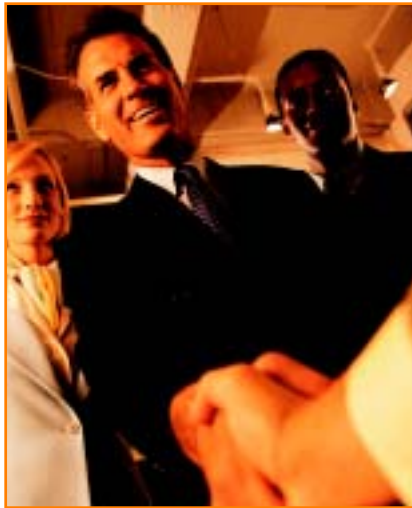
To position yourself as a potential partner/provider, your organization must understand the need of a business to remain competitive and profitable. A prospective hiring opportunity for your client must represent a “win” for the business as well as the client.

“To retain unskilled workers, employers have to invest in them like never before.”²⁰

¹⁸ Barbara Elliott, “Enterprise-Based Solutions to Poverty,” paper prepared for the State of the World Forum, 2000.

¹⁹ employer at focus group for the study: *Customer Needs and Expectations Regarding the Workforce Development System*, talking about a model community-based organization workforce development program, 2002

²⁰ Ryan Streeter, “Reaching Out to Workers ‘Left Behind,’” *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 2, 2000



It is not effective to initiate a relationship with a business simply by asking for money. Some business owners might be interested in assisting your organization and your clients on a charitable basis, but the relationship should begin as a mutually beneficial partnership. The business should see any financial commitment they might make as an investment that will yield returns to them over the long term. Within the context of this relationship, businesses will want to know what your organization can offer them, and that your services will be a good value.

Marketing Your Services to Businesses

There are two parts to successfully marketing to the business sector: understanding the business and knowing what your organization has to offer.

Developing a Target Strategy

You should develop a strategy for approaching local businesses, and this might be built through:

- A geographic focus on companies located in your community or a larger area that connects only with those employers currently hiring.
- An industry-specific approach (high-technology, hospitality or other) that targets a sector in need of workers.

Researching Your Local Job Market

No matter what marketing approach you use, it is critical to understand the employment conditions in your area and develop a strategy for tracking changes in the job market. Ask the following questions in researching the local job market:

1. What are the demand occupations in your local area?
2. What is the average pay for those occupations?
3. What skills are required for entry?
4. What are the advancement possibilities?

The local Workforce Investment Board(s) in your area should be your first stop when researching your local labor market. National

Tips for Approaching Businesses Partnerships

Your relationship is not about:

- Money first
- Charity
- Social services

Your relationship is about:

- Securing qualified applicants
- Meeting retention targets
- Improving the business while assisting your clients
- Effective investment



trend information also is available for current and expected growth occupations as well as information on pay scales, skills or training required, and advancement potential. Be sure to apply this information to the local context.

- America’s Career InfoNet (www.acinet.org) offers information about the pay level for specific occupations and identifies skills or training required for each occupation (the “Wages and Trends” link). State-specific data is also available.

- The Bureau of Labor Statistics (www.bls.gov) provides a variety of national links to employment figures by state, and often city, including wages, earnings and benefits by occupation.
- America’s Labor Market Information System (www.dol.eta.gov/almis) has sophisticated databases offering detailed information on over 10 million employers. State specific economic data can be found at a related site: www.projectionscentral.com.

Every state has a labor market information (LMI) agency that



collects information on local employment and unemployment figures, as well as other industry-specific data. LMIs are good sources for current employment trends and the future job outlook in your local area. The website: www.bls.gov/bls/ofolist.htm has a list of state labor market information contacts. Other sources of information for demand occupations in your area might come from local Chambers of Commerce, economic development agencies or the mayor’s office.

Uptown Alliance in Memphis Tennessee is benefiting from assistance from Seedco, a national nonprofit community development intermediary, and “Touching Lives and Communities” of the U.S. Department of Labor’s Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (CFBCI), to develop a comprehensive program aimed at placing unemployed and underemployed individuals in the hospitality industry. The program falls within an area called “sectoral job training and placement” by offering employability skills as well as focused

training, mentoring and follow-up to help meet employment needs of a local industry. The Uptown Alliance is utilizing curriculum developed by the American Hotel and Lodging Association then partnering with a local hotel for placement of employment ready candidates in on-the-job training, job shadowing opportunities and internships. Using both outside mentors and job assistance at the place of employment, the program plans to stay pro-active with those placed until they are firmly established at work or able to achieve a self-sufficient wage.²¹

²¹ Amy Moritz, Uptown Alliance, Memphis, TN, Interview: October 2, 2003.



Directing Your Approach

Targeting specific businesses or specific industries will allow your organization to respond to a common set of needs. Whether your organization targets and industry or a geographic area your strategy should be the same. First, learn something about the business. Understand the service or product that is delivered, the size of the company – particularly the number of employees – the type of jobs that are involved, and whether the company is hiring or laying off workers.

Second, if you are focused on a particular sector or even a specific type of job, research the industry and the work tasks required to produce the product or service. What job skills are required for the positions available? Is specialized training or credentialing necessary? What is the pay scale and career path? Is it possible for your organization to meet with the human resources department of the targeted business or receive a tour of the facility to get a better idea of working conditions and skill needs?

Knowing Your Value to Businesses

The Home Depot, a national hardware and home supply business, opens a new store somewhere in the country every 48 hours and expected to fill 240,000 new jobs in 2003. To meet their business plan, the company works with a variety of agencies. Recently, the Home Depot invited 16 workforce development organizations to a meeting to discuss possible national hiring partnerships. But when asked, “What can your organization offer in a partnership with our business?” a surprising number could not clearly answer that question.²² How would you do in a similar situation?

You must represent your organization as a professional entity. Be clear about the assistance your organization is offering and the types of training and other assistance your organization can provide. Demonstrate your commitment and reliability and follow-up with further information and answers to questions raised.

Joyce Sue Kelly of Cygnet Associates suggests the following strategy for introducing the services your organization offers:²³

- A professional business card. Job titles should emphasize business relationships, i.e. “business liaison” or “employer job developer,” rather than “counselor” or “case manager.”
- A three-ring binder that organizes informational material and keeps the employers attention on your presentation.
- A sheet of quotes from satisfied customers as well as testimonial letters from satisfied business users of your services.
- Sample resumes of people your organization places. Write a paragraph on several outstanding individuals addressing each one’s accomplishments, work history, skills and other positive features. A brochure with “hired” superimposed across some of them to emphasize successes can also be useful.
- A professional and attractive brochure that briefly describes your services.
- Any positive newspaper articles concerning your program.
- A list of where candidates placed by your organization are now working. Make it clear that individuals starting in entry-level positions have moved up the corporate ladder.

²² Craig Langford, Retail Staffing, The Home Depot, presentation at the “Three Sector Conference,” Center for Corporate Citizenship, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Washington, D.C., 2003.

²³ Joyce Sue Kelly, “How to Convince Employers to Hire the Hard to Serve,” Workshop at the 2003 National Farmworker Partnership Conference, Washington, D.C., 2003.



- Photographs of past clients who have been successful on the job or smiling with their work supervisor.
- Descriptions of any soft skills/employability preparation or specialized training offered by your organization.
- A clear summary of any reporting or documentation that will be required of the employer. Be sure to add assurances this will not take much of their time.
- Any job readiness guidelines utilized by your program to verify clients are ready for placement.
- A copy of any agreement the employer might be asked to sign.



Ms. Kelly recommends using direct mail letters and/or telephone calls as a way to introduce businesses to your program and to set up appointments for further discussion. She also suggests using a prepared script for any telephone introductions you might make.

It is also important to emphasize to employers why “outsourcing” to your organization is better than spending the time and money to do it themselves. Quality and access to skilled employees are the best reasons. Sure Hire Employment, a program of the Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC) of Clark County in Springfield Ohio, lists the following as placement benefits they offer local employers:²⁴

- Program staff visits each job site to understand employer’s needs and adequately describe the requirements to potential applicants.
- All referred applicants are job-ready with the employability skills necessary to succeed at work.
- Applicants are not “job hoppers” (i.e. will not quit their new employment after only a short period thereby wasting employer time and training resources.)

- More than one qualified candidate is referred giving employers a choice in whom to hire.
- Staff is available to provide immediate troubleshooting assistance for the employee and employer, offering to mediate if necessary to ensure both sides are satisfied with the relationship.
- Follow-up continues at specific intervals long after placement to ensure everything is working smoothly.

Do you know the value of your own organization and what it might have to offer in a partnership with local businesses? To practice, use the space on the previous page to write down two or three things that your organization does well that would answer a business owner’s question: “How will this benefit my business?”



Gaining Access to Business Partnerships

There are a number of ways to start making contacts with businesses in your community. One of the best is through your local One-Stop Career Center and its governing body, the Workforce Investment Board.

A One-Stop Career Center organizes and integrates employment, education and training services into a single network of public and private resources. Through community offices, individuals can access high-quality local information on available jobs, skill requirements, and training opportunities as well as take informational classes. Assistance ranges from self-service activities (computer-accessed databases, use of office equipment such as fax and copiers) to more concentrated help from office staff. Referrals can be made to classes, skills training and educational programs. One-Stop offices are direct partners with a variety of agents, including many community and faith-based organizations. One-Stops also employ job developers and coaches to identify employment opportunities and link job seekers with available jobs.

The Workforce Investment Board, whether at the state or local level, is the overseeing authority for

“When they fulfill your needs the way that they do, there’s no need to go farther.”²⁵

the One-Stop Career Center system. The Board establishes workforce investment policies in the local area, develops strategic plans, and determines services to be provided. Additionally, the Board designates One-Stop Center operators, identifies One-Stop partners, and sets performance standards and contracting opportunities.

Here are some other suggestions for how to identify business contacts:

- Work with the local Chamber of Commerce and other business

associations and seek opportunities to explain your organization and services at regularly scheduled meetings.

- Tap board members, congregants, volunteers, or others directly associated with your organization to reach out to local businesses and market for your services. If supporters of your organization are also business owners, ask them to be your first partners.
- Volunteer for charitable and civic activities that will put your organization in contact with business owners.

Writing Exercise:

What can your organization offer in a partnership with our business?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

²⁵ Employer at focus group for the study: *Customer Needs and Expectations Regarding the Workforce Development System*, talking about the Sure Hire Employment program, Springfield Ohio, 2002



- Set up “mini-apprenticeships” with local employers that give your organization’s clients the chance to familiarize themselves with the work environment through job shadowing.
- Join organizations where business people are members and network. This includes the Chamber of Commerce, business associations and business-sponsored community service clubs such as Kiwanis and Rotary. Become a part of your local Workforce Investment Board.
- Offer to teach workforce development-related topics at local training institutions or to speak to high school students. This is a way to advertise your organization’s mission and expertise.
- Call companies running advertisements for workers in your local newspaper. Make an appointment to talk with them about the assistance your group offers.

Offering Fee-for-Service Arrangements

Some programs are taking the idea of offering a valuable service one step further and literally selling their services to businesses. One example is the Sure Hire Employment Program of the OIC of Clark County in Ohio.²⁶

Sure Hire works only with individuals who have no barriers to immediate employment. Candidates are determined to be appropriate for the program by completing an extensive application, demonstrating job readiness skills, and passing an interview with program staff. When an employer places a job order, Sure Hire checks its skills database to locate qualified candidates. The program may also recruit applicants, including placing newspaper advertisements on behalf of the employer.

Sure Hire does all employment screening of applicants to ensure that their employability and job skills and match those specified by the employer. Referred applicants are immediately ready for hire.



The key factor in Sure Hire’s fee-for-service approach is its “thirty day retention guarantee.” Sure Hire guarantees its candidates will not leave employment nor be asked to leave for at least thirty days and agrees to waive its fee if such a separation occurs. To ensure success, program staff immediately troubleshoot problems that arise, intervening before the worker is separated from employment. Sure Hire staff also performs mandatory checks at 30, 60 and 90 days after placement.

Sure Hire has been so successful that it has been able to contract for other workforce development services. Sure Hire does all the pre-screening for one of the community’s largest employers.



It is also involved with job-related testing and background and criminal checks under separate fee arrangements with businesses.

Whether or not you are interested in setting up a fee-for-service relationship with businesses, the Sure Hire model offers several practices for successfully recruiting business customers. First, Sure Hire relies on a referral network, in their case within their own organization. If the candidates are not ready for Sure Hire services, they can be referred to other programs within the greater OIC.

It should be noted that fee-for-service arrangements should not be offered until the FBCO has established itself as an effective referral and placement service.

“We’re working with a service provider who’s determined to meet our needs at a very reasonable cost and time frame.”²⁷

A second replicable practice is Sure Hire’s thirty day retention guarantee. Your organization might consider offering a similar warranty that would be equally attractive to businesses. Guarantees for follow-up of those placed, or immediate access to your staff if the employer encounters problems can be attractive incentives. These guarantees ensure employers that your organization is willing to stand by its services in the same way that employers stand by theirs.

Formalizing Your Partner Relationship

Once your organization has attracted businesses to purchase its services, it is time to write a contract or memorandum of agreement (MOA) that spells out what each party will do.

The document should begin with a clear statement of purpose and, if appropriate, specific goals or deliverable services or products. It should be very specific as to tasks to be performed and outcomes to be expected. A timeline should be included or at minimum an end-date for the provision of individualized services and the agreement itself. Often such documents also specify a review period when all parties will revisit the arrangements and make any changes necessary. The exact specifications in the contract or MOA will depend on the services provided and parties involved.

²⁷ Employer at focus group for the study: *Customer Needs and Expectations Regarding the Workforce Development System*, talking about the Sure Hire Employment program, Springfield Ohio, 2002]



In a fee-for-service arrangement, it is necessary for both parties to agree on prices. Mike Calabrese, the Executive Director of the OIC of Clark County and the Sure Hire Employment program, set his base service fee by conducting a cost analysis of the expenses incurred by local businesses in advertising for, receiving, processing and screening applicants. He found the cost range in his community to be \$900 - \$1600. He set the Sure Hire base fee at \$400, well below the community norm, with no cost at all to the employer if the thirty day retention guarantee is broken.²⁸ Cost savings and retention guarantees are powerful incentives for business owners.





Summary

Creating a partnership takes time, effort, and lasting commitment. It also takes preparation before approaching potential business partners.

- **Background:** Understand the local context. Take time to learn about national and local trends and forecasts in the economy, as well as local workforce employment conditions and workforce preparedness. Understanding the conditions faced by employers (and their potential employees) is important in establishing relationships.
- **Know your employer partners:** Know the details of company culture and training and advancement opportunities. Ask employers about the challenges they face in finding and keeping qualified employees.
- **Be a solution for employer needs:** The employer wants to know, “What can you do for my business?” Be prepared to answer that confidently and clearly. Explain what makes your organization different from others.
- **Be at the table:** After your organization helps with placement, work on assisting with retention and diversity and awareness training. Stay engaged with the business community and keep looking for ways to expand services for clients and employers.



Checklist Of Things To Consider In Preparation For Partnering With Businesses

- Develop a target strategy.** Is your organization targeting by geography (only businesses in your community), any business that is hiring, or businesses from a certain sector or industry?
 - *Proof of the quality of your program.* Use a sheet of quotes from happy customers, newspaper articles, letters of commendation or support from businesses, or similar items so the employer can see that others are well satisfied with your services.
 - *Detailed information on your program.* This should include a description of any training topics, actual curriculum and/or job readiness guidelines your program uses.
 - *Specifics on reporting requirements.* Demonstrate to employers that any paperwork required from them will be minimal.
 - *Selling points on why you have a quality program.* Have a list of reasons why your program is outstanding to share with employers. This should include a list of the tax benefits and other publicly financed support programs for hard-to-employ populations (e.g. Work Opportunity Tax Credit, Renewal Community/Empowerment Zone Tax Credits, and Federal Bonding Program.)
 - *Formal agreement between your program and the employer.* This document should include the partnership purpose, period for the agreement and timelines, as well as the proposed terms of contract or MOA between your organization and the employer. Sample copies of formal partnership documents should be available when your organization meets with the employer.
- Research your local job market.** What is the current and future job market for your area?
- Be familiar with the **businesses your organization is approaching.** What do these firms do and what sorts of employment needs do they have?
- Development marketing materials.** Does your organization have the following items prepared and available to give employers?
 - *Professional business card.* All the information on the card should be up-to-date, with job title directed at business development not social services.
 - *Organizational brochure.* The pamphlet should be attractive, concise and easy to read, giving the employer an overview of your organization and how your program fits business needs.
 - *Information on the candidates.* This can include photographs, one paragraph resumes, a list of where your referrals are now working or other items that will give employers an idea of the quality of your candidates.

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