

# Business Value Assessment Tools

A product of  
The Aspen Institute Workforce Strategies Initiative

Industry-based workforce services should be valuable to both workers and business and industry. But for a variety of practical reasons, documentation of specific value to business is rare. To begin to address this gap, The Aspen Institute's WSI facilitated a two-year learning collaborative among nine sectoral workforce development-business partnerships. A new Business Value Assessment Toolkit, based on a range of real-life assessment experiences, is now available for free download at: <http://www.aspenwsi.org/BVAToolkit.asp>

## Business Clients

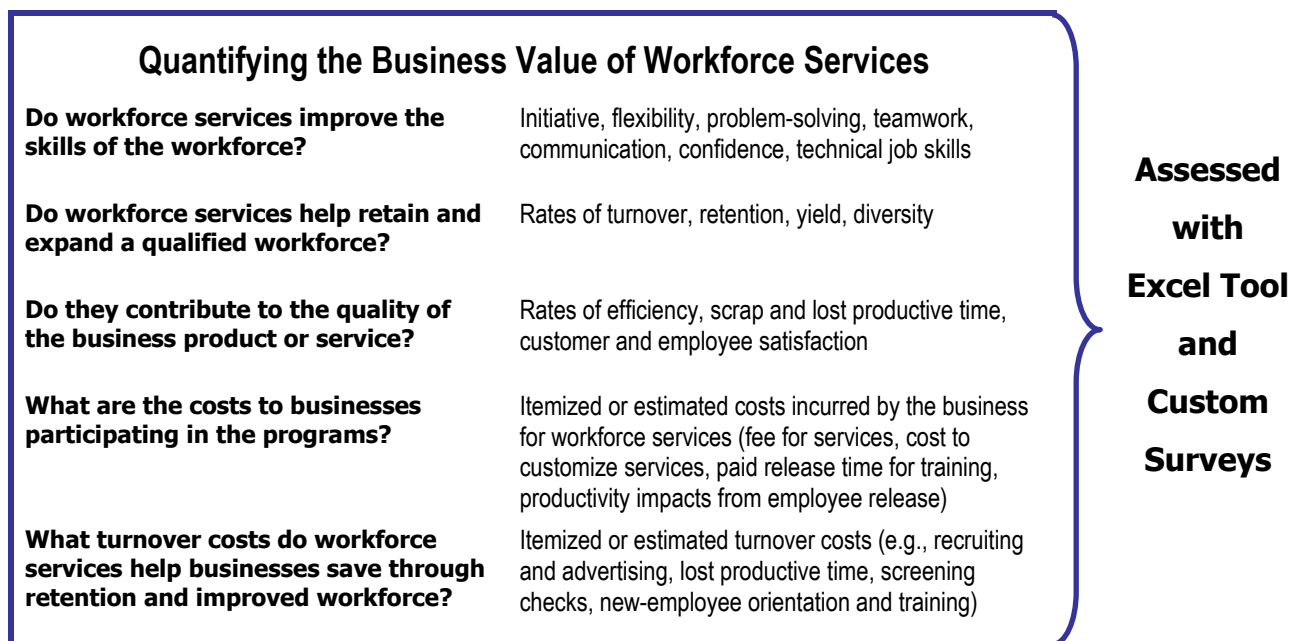
- Barber Foods, Portland, ME
- Children's Hospital Boston, Boston, MA
- Curtiss-Wright Electro-Mechanical Corporation, Cheswick, PA
- Dudek & Bock Spring Manufacturing Co., Chicago, IL
- Home Care Associates, Philadelphia, PA
- Lamb Weston-RDO, Park Rapids, MN
- Partners HealthCare Radiology Departments, Boston, MA (cont.)
- (cont.) - Brigham and Women's, Faulkner, Massachusetts General, and Newton Wellesley Hospitals; North Shore Medical Centers-Salem and Union
- S&C Electric Co., Chicago, IL
- Superbolt, Inc., Carnegie, PA
- TEAM Industries, Inc., Cambridge, MN and Bagley, MN
- Tucson Medical Center Healthcare, Tucson, AZ
- UCSF Medical Center, San Francisco, CA

## Sector Programs / Training Providers

- Boston Private Industry Council, Boston, MA
- Boston Health Care and Research Training Institute, Boston, MA
- Jane Addams Resource Corp., Chicago, IL
- Jewish Vocational Services, San Francisco, CA
- New Century Careers, Pittsburgh, PA
- Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute, South Bronx, NY
- Team Works, Inc., Park Rapids, MN
- Tucson Medical Center U., Tucson, AZ
- Univ. of S. Maine Pathways to Higher Education Pgm., Portland, ME

Facilitated and assisted by WSI staff, these workforce programs and their business clients worked intensively and collaboratively to develop and test specific methods for documenting the business value of their workforce training and services, with an emphasis on practicality and business relevance of the final measures and tools.

**Framework** This work resulted in a framework and two specific methods for assessing and documenting the value of workforce services, as shown in the figure below.



**Download Tools** The Business Value Assessment Toolkit is available for free download at:

<http://www.aspenwsi.org/BVAToolkit.asp>

**Workforce Strategies Initiative (WSI)** is a project of the Economic Opportunities Program at The Aspen Institute. WSI identifies and advances strategies that help low-income Americans gain ground in today's labor market, through applied research, facilitated dialogue, and dissemination of findings and new ideas.

WSI works primarily with **sectoral workforce projects**, which typically:

- Target a specific industry.
- Act as a strategic partner with deep knowledge of the targeted industry.
- Provide or coordinate training, supportive services and/or business assistance to improve opportunities for low-wage, low-income or unemployed workers in that industry.
- Work to achieve lasting benefits for the workers and the industry.

This work resulted from  
"Documenting Demand Side Outcomes"  
a project of



THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

Workforce Strategies Initiative  
Maureen Conway, Director

For more information about WSI's  
projects and publications contact

Paula Gray:  
(202) 736-3859

[www.aspenwsi.org](http://www.aspenwsi.org)



Workforce Strategies Initiative

**Important Things to Consider** During the learning project, the following factors came up in a variety of contexts, and were critical to the process of assessing employer value:

- *Business clients must be involved in planning.* It is critical to learn the business' priorities and whether they are willing and able to provide data (e.g., availability and confidentiality issues) and understand the time commitment involved in assessment.
- *It is best to design and implement the value assessment at the beginning of the workforce service delivery.* The business' questions about outcomes may provide information for service design, and build consensus about realistic expectations. Baseline data may need to be collected prior to service delivery. Assessment will require resources (e.g., program and employer staff time), and this commitment should be made at the start of the program.
- *Does your business client have data that is easily accessible and can be shared, or will they need to collect new data?* Some assessment questions can be addressed with existing human resource, accounting and company performance data. Some assessment questions require new data gathering (e.g., changes in skills, supervisor or customer satisfaction). Among the learning group, this typically required designing and implementing surveys.
- *Will you be able to get data to compare your results to?* To interpret the results of workforce services, you will need benchmarks such as information about performance of comparable employees or for different time periods.
- *The scale and timeframe of the workforce program should be considered when evaluating business value.* For example, were enough workers trained to influence the expected business outcome? Did other factors influence the expected business outcomes (e.g., organization changes, new technology or seasonal work volume)? Will the data collection for the planned assessment conflict with other business events or information gathering?

### **The kinds of things we learned in HEALTHCARE**

- **Retention:** 79.4% of scholarship-sponsored Radiologic Technologists (RTs) hired in 2003 were employed a year after their start date; and 100% in 2004. In comparison, 56% of RTs hired in 2003 from other sources were employed one year after their start date; and 84% in 2004. The scholarship RTs were also rated comparably on performance.
- **Quality:** In-home patient clients from a customer survey were more satisfied with aides trained by the workforce program, than were clients of aides of other providers.
- **Job Performance:** Between 60 and 90 percent of managers of entry-level employees from a disadvantaged worker program rated the employees about as likely or more likely to demonstrate selected soft skills as traditional hires; having these employees in the workforce resulted in overall time and cost savings.

### **The kinds of things we learned in MANUFACTURING**

- **Retention:** Basic manufacturing skills-training and placement services were linked to retention almost twice the company's rate; significant turnover costs were saved.
- **Job Performance & Satisfaction:** A vocational ESL training evaluated by supervisors led to improved employee soft skills and communication, and to supervisors' rating their perceptions of the job and the overall work environment as improved.
- **Job Performance & Productivity:** A series of lean manufacturing training activities resulted in improved communication, teamwork, productivity and related costs savings.
- **Efficiency:** Math skills training was linked to improved scrap, on-time delivery, and efficiency rates.
- **Soft Skills & Retention:** Employees in career preparation courses were more likely to show flexibility, problem-solving, confidence and to remain employed longer than employees who did not attend training; significant turnover costs were saved.