

America's Career Kit Electronic Tools

America's Career Kit is a suite of four electronic tools: America's Job Bank, America's Career InfoNet, America's Learning Exchange and America's Service Locator. The tools were developed and are maintained through the leadership of the U.S. Department of Labor and in partnership with state workforce agencies, local workforce service delivery providers and education and training institutions and private sector organizations.

America's Job Bank (www.ajb.org)

America's Job Bank (AJB) is the largest and one of the busiest job banks on the Internet. Job seekers can post their resume where thousands of employers search every day, search for job openings, and find their dream job. Employers can post job listings in the nation's largest online labor exchange, create customized job orders, and search resumes automatically to find the right people fast.

America's Career InfoNet (www.acinet.org)

America's Career InfoNet (ACINet) helps people make better, more informed career decisions. ACINet is ideal for job seekers, employers, human resource specialists and workforce development specialists to: learn more about typical wages and employment trends across occupations and industries; check education, knowledge, skills and

abilities against requirements for most occupations; search for employer contact information nationwide, cost of living data, and call up state profiles with labor market conditions; and to find more than 4,000 external links to the most extensive set of career resources available on the Internet.

America's Learning Exchange (www.alx.org)

America's Learning eXchange (ALX) connects people to career development, training and education, and employment resources important to remaining competitive in today's workforce. ALX is supported by many professional training and educational organizations dedicated to providing the knowledge, expertise, and guidance to ensure users find the resources they need.

America's Service Locator (www.servicelocator.org)

America's Service Locator (ASL) is the newest part of America's Career Kit. It helps individuals locate public service offices with information on finding a job, planning a career, locating training, dealing with job loss and recruiting employees. Visitors to the site can get a map and driving directions to the nearest location providing the desired services, just by typing in their address.

One-Stop Career Centers

A One-Stop Career Center is a site that organizes employment, education and training services into a single network of public and private resources at the local, state and national level. State and local communities began creating their own One-Stop Career Centers in the early 1990's. However, it wasn't until a bi-partisan majority of Congress passed the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) in 1998 that many of the barriers to creating effective One-Stop Career Centers were eliminated and the centers became required by law.

At these integrated local One-Stop Career Centers, individuals can access high quality local information on available jobs, skill requirements, and training provider performance. While the Workforce Investment Act establishes certain minimum requirements for the structure of the local system, it allows local communities significant flexibility in the design and implementation of their One-Stop Career Center systems. The partners required by the law to be part of the One-Stop Career Centers are:

- WIA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Activities
- Employment Service
- Adult Education
- Postsecondary Vocational Education
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Welfare-to-Work
- Title V of the Older Americans Act
- Job Corps
- WIA Indian and Native American programs
- WIA National Farmworker Jobs Program
- Trade Adjustment Assistance
- NAFTA Transitional Adjustment Assistance
- Veterans Employment and Training Programs
- Community Services Block Grant
- Employment and training activities carried out by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Unemployment Insurance

Each One-Stop Career Center partner is required to be represented on the local board and to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the local board describing what services are to be provided at the One-Stop Career Center, how the costs of the services and the operating costs of the system will be funded, methods of referral of individuals between the One-Stop operator and the One-Stop partners, the duration of the MOU, and the procedures for amending the MOU.

A One-Stop operator is designated to manage the day-to-day functioning of the local One-Stop Career Center. Postsecondary educational institutions, local Employment Service offices, community-based organizations, private for-profit entities, and government agencies are eligible to be One-Stop operators. A local board may be designated with the agreement of the chief local elected official and the Governor.

Each local area must have at least one physical "full service" center where customers can access services from each of the One-Stop partners. Additional service structures may include other full service centers or a network of affiliated sites, or a network of One-Stop partners that can consist of physical sites or electronic access points. Regardless of the design, all One-Stop Career Centers must be based on a "no wrong door" approach that assures customers access to information on all of the core services.

A business-led State Workforce Investment Board is appointed by the Governor to oversee each state's One-Stop Career Center system and to develop a statewide five-year strategic plan. The Governor also designates a state agency to oversee the eligible training provider identification process. In most cases, the Governors have designated the state workforce agency that carries out the state's labor exchange programs.

The federal role in the One-Stop Career Centers system is generally to coordinate activities between federal agencies and to provide administration and oversight to ensure financial accountability of programs and compliance with legal requirements.

One-Stop Career Center Services

Each One-Stop Career Center offers services ranging from self-service activities to more concentrated staff-assisted services. The Workforce Investment Act provides for a continuum of three levels of services that individuals are to progress through: core services; intensive services; and training, with the more extensive levels of services being provided only after the individual is unable to obtain employment with basic services.

Core Services

The Core Services required at each One-Stop Career Center are:

- Outreach, intake (which may include worker profiling), and orientation to the One-Stop Career Center
- Initial assessment
- Job search and placement assistance, and career counseling
- Provision of labor market information
- Provision of information on:
 - eligible providers of training and other services
 - local performance outcomes
 - activities at the One-Stop Career Center
 - filing claims for Unemployment Insurance
 - supportive services
- Assistance in establishing eligibility for Welfare-to-Work and financial aid assistance.
- Follow-up services

Intensive Services

Intensive services may be provided to adults and dislocated workers who are unemployed, have received at least one core service and are unable to obtain employment through core services, or who are employed and have received at least one core service if the One-Stop operator determines the individual is in need of more intensive services in order to obtain or retain employment that leads to self-sufficiency.

Allowable Intensive Services include:

- Comprehensive and specialized assessments of skill levels (e.g., diagnostic testing)
- Development of an individual employment plan

- Group counseling
- Individual counseling and career planning
- Case management
- Short-term prevocational services

Training Services

Individuals who have met the eligibility requirements for intensive services, have received at least one core service, and are unable to obtain or retain employment through intensive services may receive training services. Through One-Stop Career Centers, these individuals will be evaluated to determine whether or not they are in need of training and if they possess the skills and qualifications needed to participate successfully in the training program in which they express an interest. Training services must be directly linked to occupations that are in demand in the local area, or in another area to which the individual receiving services is willing to relocate. As with intensive services, in areas where the local board and the Governor have determined that adult funds are limited, those with the greatest need may receive priority in the use of such funds for training services.

One-Stop Career Centers will provide access to consumer information about training providers that can assist individuals in gaining relevant skills — including information on the performance of such providers in placing graduates in employment. Through local boards, each state must maintain a list of eligible training providers that meet performance levels as set by the Governor. The performance levels may be adjusted upward, as appropriate, by local boards. Individuals may choose any provider from the list of approved providers, whether or not the provider is located in the local area where the individual resides.

With limited exceptions, training services are provided through the use of Individual Training Accounts (ITAs). States and local boards determine the structure of the ITA system in their local areas that may take a variety of forms including vouchers, credit cards or debit cards.

Youth Programs

The Workforce Investment Act reforms the youth training system and the Job Corps program, creating a system with a single funding stream that is closely linked to the labor market. It also gives local areas greater discretion in determining how to allocate resources and provide services to youth within a comprehensive statewide system.

The new youth program is based on integrating academic and vocational education, integrating work-based and classroom-based instruction, creating connections with employers and private-sector involvement.

The Act requires the creation of a Youth Council under each local board. The Youth Councils include representatives of youth service agencies, parents, public housing authorities, Job Corps, former youth program participants, and other appropriate individuals.

The Youth Council may serve roles such as: developing portions of the local plan relating to youth, recommending the providers of youth activities to be awarded grants by the local board, conducting oversight of these providers, and coordinating youth activities in the local area.

Youth services are delivered by entities that are competitively awarded a grant or contract by the local board. Such entities may or may not be the same as those providing other WIA services under the One-Stop Career Center system in the local area. Each local area can determine the extent to which they want to integrate youth services with the adult and dislocated worker delivery system in the One-Stop Career Center.

In order to be eligible for youth services, a youth must be 14-21, low income, and meet at least one of six specified barriers to employment including: basic skills deficiency; a school dropout; homeless, a runaway, or a foster child, pregnant or a parent,

an offender, or require additional assistance to complete an educational program, or secure and hold employment.

Five percent of the youth served in a local area may be non-low-income if they experience one or more specified barriers to graduation or employment. In addition, in an attempt to focus resources on those most in need, thirty percent of funds in each local area must be expended on out-of-school youth. Youth who do not meet the eligibility requirements must be referred to the One-Stop Career Center or another appropriate program for further assessment in order to meet the basic skills and training needs of the individual.

The new law requires an individual assessment of skill levels and service needs and the development of a service strategy for each youth participant. The Act also outlines ten required elements of the youth program including

- Tutoring and study skills training and instruction
- Alternative secondary school services
- Summer employment opportunities
- Paid and unpaid work experiences
- Occupational skill training
- Leadership development activities
- Supportive services
- Adult mentoring
- Comprehensive guidance and counseling
- Follow-up services

An emphasis is placed on longer-term service by providing such things as: adult mentoring both during and after participation, for at least one year, and follow-up services for at least one year.

The Workforce Investment Act also strengthens the Job Corps program and ensures that it functions as an integral part of the workforce investment system.

The Workforce Investment System

In 1998 Congress passed the Workforce Investment Act, the first major reform of the nation's job training system in over 15 years. It was designed to replace the patchwork federal system that developed over the last sixty years with a locally designed and driven system to improve the quality of the workforce, enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the nation and reduce welfare dependency.

The Workforce Investment Act became fully effective on July 1, 2000. It passed by a wide bipartisan majority in part because it was designed to permit communities and states to build a workforce investment system that respects individual choices, reflects local conditions, and results in increased employment, retention, and earnings of participants, and increases occupational skills attained by participants.

The Workforce Investment Act redesigned the nation's workforce development system to:

- Streamline multiple employment and training programs into an integrated One-Stop Career Center system, simplifying access to services for job seekers and employers.
- Empower individuals to get the services and skills they need to improve their employment opportunities through qualified training programs of their choosing.
- Increase accountability of states, localities and training providers for their performance based on job placement rates, earnings, retention in employment, skill gains, and credentials earned.
- Involve local elected officials and the private sector in business-led boards for the local areas focusing on strategic planning, policy development and local oversight.
- Allow state and local flexibility to implement innovative and comprehensive workforce investment systems to meet the needs of their communities.
- Improve youth programs by creating Youth Councils that are linked more closely to local labor market needs and the community.

New Roles and Flexibility

Partnerships at all levels — local, state and federal — and across the system are the hallmark of the new workforce investment system. All levels are required to coordinate and collaborate with agencies and entities that have not been a part of the traditional workforce development system. Accountability and responsibility for outcomes at all levels of the system now exists, with each level having unique and integral roles and responsibilities.

Local Responsibilities

In the new system, the local level remains key for operational and administrative decisions. It is where customers access services and where the design for the new One-Stop Career Center system and the consumer-driven training system is implemented. Local Workforce Investment Boards have important roles in the new system.

The chief local elected officials have a central role in the administration of workforce investment activities. Specifically, the chief local elected official:

- Appoints the members of the local board that establishes workforce investment policies in the local area;
- Develops, in collaboration with the local board, the local workforce investment plan, which specifies the types of services that are provided;
- Serves as the grant recipient for job training funds provided under the Act, and may designate a sub-recipient or fiscal agent;
- Works with the local board to: conduct oversight of the One-Stop Career Center in the local area; designate and/or certify One-Stop operators; identify optional One-Stop partners from participating programs; and
- Works with the local board to negotiate with the Governor the performance levels that apply to local areas and that could result in incentive funds or sanctions.

Additionally, representatives of chief elected officials are members of the state board that develops the state plan and carries out other statewide activities.

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State Responsibilities

The Act includes numerous features designed to provide states with increased flexibility in designing and implementing workforce investment systems. It also prescribes new roles for Governors. For example, the Workforce Investment Act:

- Requires that each state establish a business-led State Workforce Investment Board, consisting of the Governor and appointees of the Governor representing business, education, labor, local elected officials and others.
- Requires states to develop a comprehensive 5-year strategic state plan for all workforce investment activities, and monitor the operation of the workforce investment system.
- Increases, significantly, the Governor's flexibility to finance activities that are state priorities by allowing the state to reserve fifteen percent of the funds for formula-funded youth, adult and dislocated worker programs to use for an array of workforce investment activities.
- Provides the Governor with a significant role in developing performance measures and negotiating expected levels of performance used to evaluate the effectiveness of the workforce investment system in his/her State.

State Workforce Investment Boards also play an important role in the design and implementation of state systems. For example, Boards assist the Governor in developing a 5-year strategic plan, continuously improving the system, designating local workforce investment areas, developing state performance measures, and developing funding formulas.

Federal Responsibilities

The federal role is also changed. The federal role is now primarily one of oversight that focuses on coordinating services with other federal agencies, and ensuring overall accountability for results. The federal role includes:

- Strategic planning and policy formulation.
- Performance accountability to ensure that states and localities meet program performance requirements and provide the highest level of service to customers.
- Providing research and evaluation findings to the workforce investment system.
- Providing expert assistance to state and local partners and other stakeholders.
- Administration and oversight to ensure financial accountability of programs and compliance with legal requirements.

Supplement
Empower
Reach
Verify
Expand

Supplement the resources of your staff and volunteers by allowing your local One-Stop Career Center staff to assist you with the employment needs in your community.

If your Community-Based Organization is like many others, the needs of your community far outweigh your resources. If that is your situation, you may want to supplement your staff and volunteers by having your local One-Stop Career Center assist you with the employment needs in your community.

The staff at your local One-Stop Career Center is trained to help people achieve their career goals. By referring those in your community with employment needs to their local One-Stop Career Center, you can get workers in touch with the help they need, while freeing up you and your staff's valuable time to concentrate on other critical problems.

There are many ways you can encourage those in your community to get the help they need at their local One-Stop Career Center, including:

- Making reference to One-Stop Career Centers and America's Career Kit tools in appropriate casual conversations.
- Recommending One-Stop Career Centers and America's Career Kit tools during appropriate meeting and counseling sessions.
- Including articles about One-Stop Career Centers and America's Career Kit tools in organization newsletters.
- Providing One-Stop Career Center and America's Career Kit tools information on bulletin boards.
- Scheduling a Community-Based Organization sponsored trip to your local One-Stop Career Center.
- Scheduling a Community-Based Organization sponsored training session on the tools of America's Career Kit.
- Hosting a special career-planning seminar featuring a One-Stop Career Center staff member.

Your organization can provide this vital assistance without depleting your limited time and financial resources. It requires no formal agreement with the local One-Stop Career Center, but can pay tremendous dividends in the lives of individuals in your community.

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Empower your organization's supporters and volunteers to help those in need.

One of the greatest strengths of many Community-Based Organizations is the sense of caring, compassion and support they demonstrate in their communities. People facing critical employment problems are often in need of that type of support. Whether a person is facing the loss of a job, an impending lay-off, or the need to change jobs, your organization is well positioned to provide individuals with some of the support they need during these stressful situations should you chose to do so.

Although most One-Stop Career Centers provide these services, some Community-Based Organizations may choose to provide them as well to:

- Build a stronger sense of camaraderie within your organization
- Draw people into your organization
- Link people in your community with real life success stories from your community so they can have a role model to emulate

Your organization can empower your supporters and volunteers to help those facing employment problems in numerous ways, including:

- Internet Access – Provide a resource room in your organization's building where job seekers can access the tools of America's Career Kit (www.ajb.org) to search for jobs, enter a resume, or explore career opportunities.
- Mentoring – Pair someone with employment problems with a volunteer who is well on the way to achieving his/her employment goals. The mentor can provide advice and encouragement, and can also serve as a real-life success story that perseverance will get results.
- Work experience – Ask your volunteers who own their businesses and those who are managers to provide work experience to someone with employment problems. This can result in critically needed income, newly acquired work skills, valuable experience and positive references for their resumes.
- Communications assistance – Ask those in your organization with good communications skills to help a job seeker create and proofread resumes and cover letters for proper grammar, punctuation and content.
- Interview preparation – Ask your volunteers who have management or Human Resource experience to help a job seeker prepare for upcoming interviews. This could result in increased courage and confidence at subsequent interviews.
- Education tutoring – Ask those in your organization who are well educated to tutor those people wanting to improve their skill in areas such as reading, writing, mathematics and English speaking skills.

By empowering your volunteers and supporters to help those facing serious job difficulties, your organization provides an invaluable service in your community and strengthens its impact and consequently its position within the community.

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Reach out to local citizens by helping to provide needed resources in the community.

Many Community-Based Organizations already offer critical support services to remove barriers to employment for those in their community. These services are often ones that may fall between the cracks of government programs, including such things as childcare, transportation, or assistance with clothing.

These resources can mean the difference between someone being able to work or having to go on public assistance. However, publicity about these services is often spread by word of mouth. Community-Based Organizations with adequate resources which seek to expand their reach into the community may want to consider forming a relationship with their local One-Stop Career Center.

Your organization can expand the number of people it reaches in the community by:

- Informal Arrangement – Letting One-Stop Career Center leaders know about the services your organization already provides and inviting the local One-Stop Career Center staff to refer people in need of those services.
- Formal Arrangement – After getting approval from the Local Board and the chief elected official, you can sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the Local Board to become a formal One-Stop partner. Partners can be located on-site or off-site.

For more information contact your local Workforce Investment Board or your local One-Stop Career Center.

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Expand

Verify that the resources in your local Workforce investment system are being used wisely.

The Workforce Investment Act established a workforce investment system that depends upon the active participation and leadership of businesses and community leaders. The legislation established supervisory bodies at the local and state levels. They are:

- Local Workforce Investment Board – The chief local elected officials of each local area that hosts a One-Stop Career Center must appoint a business-led Local Workforce Investment Board or an alternative entity consisting of representatives of business, local educational entities, labor organizations, community-based organizations, economic development agencies, and One-Stop partners, that, among other things, will:
 - Establish the workforce investment policies in the local area;
 - Develop the local workforce investment plan, which specifies the types of services that are provided;
 - Conduct oversight of the One-Stop Career Center system in the local area, designate and/or certify One-Stop operators, identify optional One-Stop partners from participating programs and negotiate and enter into Memoranda of Understanding under which One-Stop Career Centers are administered; and
 - Negotiate, with the governor, the performance levels that apply to local areas and that could result in incentive funds or sanctions.
- Local Youth Council – Each Local Workforce Investment Board is required to have a local Youth Council, whose responsibilities may include: developing portions of the local plan relating to youth, recommending the providers of youth activities to be awarded grants by the local board, conducting oversight of these providers, and coordinating youth activities in the local area. The Youth Councils include representatives of youth service agencies; parents; public housing authorities; Job Corps; former youth program participants; and other appropriate individuals.
- State Workforce Investment Board – Each state is required to establish a business-led State Workforce Investment Board, consisting of the governor and appointees of the governor representing business, education, labor, local elected officials and others. The Boards assist the governor in developing a five-year strategic plan, continuously improving the system, designating local workforce investment areas, developing state performance measures, and developing funding formulas.

Each of these supervisory bodies needs people who care about helping individuals meet their full potential and providing a qualified workforce for area employers.

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Expand your resources by applying for federal dollars.

Faith-Based and community-based organizations may desire to become providers of services under federally funded programs through contracts, sub-contracts, grants and sub-grants. There are opportunities available for interested organizations to become such service providers, and President Bush has undertaken a number of initiatives to enhance the opportunities to do so.

On January 29, 2001, only nine days after taking the Oath of Office, President George W. Bush signed two Executive Orders and proposed legislation to clear the way for Faith-Based and Community Organizations to compete for funds used to provide government services. His actions were to accomplish three goals:

- Identify and eliminate improper Federal barriers to effective Faith-Based and Community-Based programs through legislative, regulatory, and programmatic reforms;
- Increase private giving to nonprofits, Faith-Based Organizations and Community Groups by expanding tax deductions and other initiatives; and
- Expanding the involvement of Faith-Based and Community Groups in after-school and literacy services, help the children of prisoners, and support other citizens in need.

The first Executive Order President Bush signed created an office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives within the White House that reports directly to the President.

President Bush's second Executive Order created Executive Department Centers for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives in five federal agencies: Labor, Health and Human Services; Housing and Urban Development; Justice and Education. The Centers are charged with eliminating regulatory, contracting and other programmatic obstacles to the participation of Faith-Based and Community Organizations in the provision of social services.

The legislation President Bush proposed includes a \$500 per person charity tax credit and a charitable deduction for those who do not itemize on their tax returns.

Organizations wanting to learn more about the Faith-Based and Community Organization initiative should visit:

www.whitehouse.gov

www.dol.gov/ofbci

www.WorkforceATM.org