

Worknet

of Merced County
Employment Resource Center

Challenger Award Application for One-Stop Certification 2003

**Merced County
Workforce Investment Board**



2003 Challenger Certification Application Form
for Comprehensive Sites

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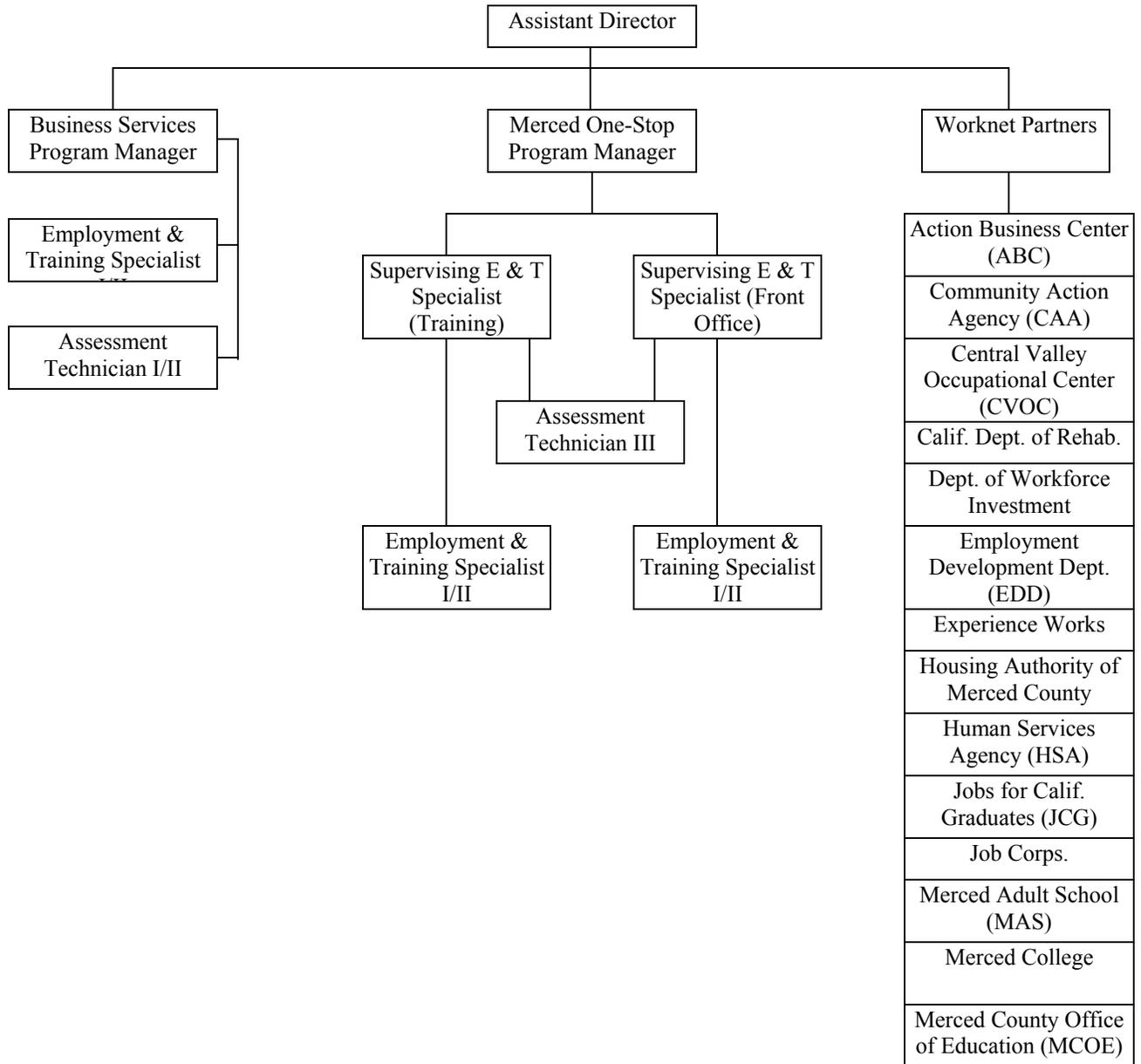
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Worknet Organizational Chart



Glossary

ABC	Action Business Center
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
CAPE	California Awards for Performance and Excellence
CBEST	California Basic Education Skills Test
CETA	Comprehensive Employment Training Act
CLEO	Chief Local Elected Official
CQI	Continuous Quality Improvement
DCR	Director of Civil Rights
DOL	Department of Labor
Dept. of WI	Department of Workforce Investment
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
EDD	Employment Development Department
EDP	Employment Development Plan
EO	Equal Opportunity
ERC	Employment Resource Center
ETPL	Eligible Training Provider List
GED	General Education Diploma
IDP	Individual Development Plan
IEP	Individual Employment Plan
ITP	Individual Training Plan
JCG	Jobs for California Graduates
JTPA	Job Training Partnership Act
LAN	Local Area Network
MIS	Management Information System

MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAWDP	National Association of Workforce Development Professionals
NEO	New Employee Orientation
OJT	On-the-Job Training
OOR	Occupational Outlook Report
OWI	Office of Workforce Investment
PITD	Private Industry Training Department
SAGE	System of Assessment and Group Evaluation
TTY	Telecommunications Device
WASC	Western Association of Schools and Colleges
WAN	Wide Area Network
WIA	Workforce Investment Act
WIB	Workforce Investment Board
WID	Workforce Investment Department
WLT	Worknet Leadership Team
YEC	Youth Employability Card

The Merced County Workforce Investment Board

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Compliance Criteria

A. Must provide all core services listed in the Workforce Investment Act, as described in Section 134(d)(2) of the Act.

1. Determination of whether individuals are eligible to receive assistance.

Eligibility determination is available for WIA funded Core B, Intensive and Training Services for Adult and Dislocated Workers. Eligibility determination for other program services is also available at the Worknet Employment Resource Center (ERC). Examples of those program services include: Youth Services, Older Worker Services, Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker Programs, Job Corps, and Wagner Peyser funded services delivered by the Employment Development Department.

2. Outreach, intake and orientation to information and other services available.

Outreach efforts to customers in Merced County include billboards, newspaper ads, job fairs, radio announcements, along with flyers and posters to announce events and services available at Worknet ERC. Partners, like Merced Adult School, provide brochures to customers and also disseminate information about Worknet in their student orientations at their campus.

Intake information is gathered from customers utilizing Worknet Services. Information such as customer activity, types of services used, customer satisfaction, and outcomes are tracked.

Orientations to the Worknet system are held once a week. Orientations are comprehensive and include information about the partners, resources, and services available from Worknet ERC.

3. Initial assessment of skill levels, aptitudes, abilities and support service needs.

Staff utilizes a triage approach to perform an initial assessment of the customers' skill levels, aptitudes, abilities, and support services required. Determinations are made of the following: The reason why the customer is at Worknet, identifying the services they want and which partner can best assist them. Initial assessment is accomplished by providing the customer with several tools to measure their skill levels, aptitudes, and abilities. SAGE (System of Assessment and Group Evaluation), Career Navigator, Job Skills Office/Industrial, Plato, and Mavis Bacon Typing Tutor are a few of the tools.

A portfolio is completed by the customer providing additional information, and is used to determine any additional assessment needs. An example of the types of information included in the portfolio are: Educational level, work history, listing of transferable skills, career exploration, initial assessment of supportive service needs, including but not limited to, personal budget, childcare, and transportation.

4. Job Search, placement assistance and where appropriate career counseling.

At the Worknet ERC job search assistance is provided through a combination of several mediums. Internet based job search listings are used and include sites such as CalJobs, America's Job Bank, and Central Valley Jobs.com. Job announcements and fliers are posted. Daily newspapers with local job opportunities are also available. Workshops on job search related topics; for example, interviewing, resumes, applications and career planning, are conducted on a regular basis for jobseekers.

Placement assistance is available including information about employers recruiting through the partners. The types of employer information provided are position descriptions, information on job requirements, company benefits, and method of applying (resume, application, phone, fax, mail on-line, or in person). Official applications for City, County, Merit System, and School Districts are available for the convenience of jobseekers to utilize. Job Coaches provide information and assistance with resumes, applications, mock interviews, and interviewing tips. Job Coaches assist jobseekers by providing job leads and screening and referring appropriate candidates who meet the specific requirements of employers.

Career counseling for individuals as appropriate is provided by all of the mandatory partners. Merced County Office of Education/Regional Occupational Program (ROP) offers Career Exploration Workshops at Worknet ERC. The Employment Development Department's representatives provide the official labor exchange job search and placement services, both through workshops and individual counseling.

5. Employment statistics information for local, regional and national labor market areas including job vacancy listings, information on job skills necessary to obtain the jobs described in the clause, and local information relating to local occupations in demand and the earnings and skill requirements for such occupations.

Labor Market Information is available to job seekers and employers in many formats. Access to local, regional and national labor market information is provided through the Worknet ERC computer lab on the Internet. The Employment Development Department (EDD), Workforce Investment Board, Worknet and Department of Workforce Investment websites provide links to local, regional and national labor market areas. Information on job skills necessary to obtain an occupation is available through the local Occupational Outlook Report (OOR), which is on-line and in printed form. The OOR includes information on occupations in demand, earnings, skill requirements, education, experience, and benefits for such occupations. Each of the Workforce Investment Areas in California also provide similar labor market information through their OORs accessible on the EDD website. The US Works website also has local and state information and provides additional information to include the name and location of the employer that hires for a specific occupation. Other additional information includes the contact person's name, and a map showing directions to the business. A link to another LMI resource is to America's Career Infonet that provides nationwide labor market information. America's Job Bank also provides nationwide job listings. There are workshops available at the Worknet ERC to educate customers on how to find and use Labor Market Information resources.

6. Provision of performance information and program cost information on eligible providers of training services.

Customers utilize computers in the center's computer resource lab to access the Eligible Training Providers List on the EDD website at edd.ca.gov. Customers may search by provider, training, and location. Information on program cost is also available on the website. There is also a list of the Eligible Training Providers specific to Merced County.

7. Provision of information regarding how the local area is performing on the local performance measures.

Information on Merced Workforce Area's performance in relation to local performance measures is available on the Department of Workforce Investment's website. Utilizing computers in the Worknet ERC can access performance information. Staff is available for individuals who need assistance in obtaining performance information.

8. Provision of accurate information relating to the availability of supportive services including childcare and transportation available in the local area.

The Family Resource Council provides a Community Resource Directory that is updated yearly. It is available on-line and in hard copy. The Resource Directory is used to provide information about community support services. These include food, general assistance, health services, childcare resource and referral services, transportation, human services and veteran's services as examples. Worknet ERC staff provide information and facilitate referrals for supportive services. A brochure that summarizes the services most used is available as a handout to customers. The local Childcare Resource and Referral Agency provides brochures with information on programs they operate. There are also brochures that have bus routes and rates for the Merced County Regional Transit System (MARTS).

9. Information regarding filing claims for unemployment compensation.

Unemployment Insurance (UI) Claim filing can be accomplished by utilizing the phones in the lobby of the Worknet ERC or on-line in the computer resource lab. Staff and partners are fully aware of the procedure for filing UI Claims. Brochures are available with the phone number and website. The EDD representative at the Worknet ERC will research individual questions regarding UI Claims and assist the customer in contacting a UI Benefits representative. The EDD representative may enter comments or notes into the customers record to add or clarify information while assisting the customer with claim questions.

10. Assistance in establishing eligibility for welfare-to-work; and programs of financial aid assistance for training and education programs.

Assistance is available at Worknet for individuals wishing to establish eligibility for the WIA funded welfare-to-work program. Financial Aid workshops are provided to assist customers in understanding the process for applying and completing applications for financial aid for training and/or educational programs.

11. Follow-up services, including counseling regarding the workplace, for participants in the workforce investment activities who are placed in unsubsidized employment for not less than 12 months (defined as applying to WIA only).

The Department of Workforce Investment has a follow-up unit that case manages an individual from the point of entering employment through the exit process. Follow-up is individualized, and is continued for not less than twelve (12) months from obtaining unsubsidized employment. The WIA funded follow-up function provides counseling, supportive services to assist customers in retaining employment, and referrals to partner and community services depending upon the needs of the customer.

B. Must provide access to intensive services. Must also provide access to training and serve as a point of access for Individual Training Accounts.

The Worknet ERC Operator, Merced County Department of Workforce Investment, provides access through staff-assisted core services to intensive and training services. The staff-assisted activity is defined as counseling and evaluation to determine whether the customer is in need of intensive services. The gateway to intensive services is the receipt of at least one core service. The gateway to training services is receipt of at least one intensive service. The local policy defines the development of the Individual Employment Plan as the minimum intensive service that must be received prior to training and/or accessing Individual Training Accounts. Individual Training Accounts are accessible for WIA registered customers. Customers desiring to access Individual Training Accounts have an opportunity to research information on training by occupation, school and location through accessing the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) on computers at Worknet ERC. The ETPL also includes information on availability of financial aid, tutoring and handicap access.

Using the Department of Labor's profile for skills, aptitudes, temperaments and physical requirements of a job, and comparing those requirements to the jobseeker's profile from their comprehensive objective assessment, customers are able to make informed choices about appropriate training.

C. Must provide access to all labor exchange services authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act.

Labor exchange services authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act are accessible at the Worknet ERC. A representative of the EDD is available at the Worknet ERC four days a week to provide authorized Wagner-Peyser labor exchange services.

D. Must provide the core services and access to all of the workforce programs and activities carried out by mandated One-Stop partners.

Worknet ERC, through the operator and partners, provides all of the 15 core services mentioned in the Workforce Investment Act. Core Services include but are not limited to: Title 1B eligibility determination; outreach, intake and orientation to Worknet; initial assessment of skill levels, aptitudes, abilities, and need for supportive services; employment statistics information including job vacancy listings, job skill requirements for job listings, information on demand occupations, performance information on eligible training providers, performance information on the local Worknet system; information on supportive services and referral to supportive services;

information regarding filing for Unemployment Insurance compensation; assistance in establishing eligibility for welfare to work activities and for other training and education programs; resource room usage; Internet browsing (job, information and training searches); Internet accounts (Career Kit, Personnel Kit); initial development of Employment Plan; talent referrals (informational, e.g., talent scouts), referrals of jobseeker resumes to open positions; workshops and job clubs. Access to all Workforce Investment programs and activities is provided through the mandated partners' presence at the center or referral to partner programs in the system.

E. Additional Criteria for all comprehensive One-Stop Centers to be certified include:

1. High-speed computer access to Internet based information system.

Computers in the Worknet Computer Lab are connected to the Internet through a T-1 Line, allowing high-speed access to Internet search engines and Internet based information.

2. Access to computers, including printing, access to software programs, which could include word processing programs for resume development and job application and cover letter preparation.

Software provided on the computers in the computer resource lab includes Mavis Bacon Typing Tutor, Microsoft Word 2000 as a word processing program for resume development, job application and cover letter preparation. WinWay Resume is also available for assistance in resume preparation. Access to computers especially equipped for individuals with special needs, such as physical/visual, is available at the Worknet ERC. Printing capability is available for all software. Printers are available to produce copies of cover letters, resumes, applications, and thank you letters.

3. Access to telephones and fax for job search.

An area in the Worknet ERC is provided for customers to use telephones for contacting employers and other job search activities. A fax machine is available for the customer to use as well as a photocopier that the customer may access for self-service or staff-assisted service. A specially equipped phone for individuals who are hearing impaired is also available for use at Worknet.

4. Access to up-to-date career and local community resource information.

Access to up-to-date career information is available through the Internet, ERISS, and the Occupational Outlook for Merced County. Linkage to job search hotlines is available on the computers as well as written materials in book, brochure and flyer format.

The Family Resource Council provides a Community Resource Directory that is updated yearly. The up-to-date information is available on-line and in hard copy. The Resource Directory is used to provide information about community resources.

A brochure has been developed that lists the providers of the most often used local community resources. This brochure is available for customers at Worknet ERC.

5. Strategies to meet any demand for “nontraditional” hours of operation for those who cannot attend during the 8 am–5 pm hours of operation.

The One-Stop is open from 7:30 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. three evenings a week, and from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Saturday to meet the demand for nontraditional hours of operation for those who cannot attend during the 8 a.m.-5 p.m. hours. Hours are periodically reviewed and adjusted as information is gathered and analyzed to determine customer needs and demands.

6. Information desk and/or resource areas are staffed.

There is a centrally located information desk in the center to assist customers in locating services they wish to access. The resource area is staffed to assist customers in locating information, operating computers, preparing for and proctoring skills testing for certification. Staff assistance in locating specific websites, operating peripherals such as printers, fax machines or locating printed materials for the specific needs of the customer is available in the resource area.

7. There is a presence of mandated partners on site.

The following mandated partners have a presence on site: Employment Development Department, Department of Workforce Investment, Title V Senior Employment Services/Experience Works, Job Corps, Central Valley Opportunity Center, California State Department of Rehabilitation, Merced County Office of Education, Jobs for California Graduates, Merced College, Merced Adult School, Merced County Housing Authority, and Human Services Agency’s Title V Program.

8. A case management system exists that provides guidance for customers participating in intensive and training services.

A system of case management exists at Worknet ERC that provides guidance for the customer participating in intensive and training services. An individual customer is assigned an Employment and Training Specialist who is responsible for ensuring that the customer’s assessment is complete. Career counseling is provided, an Individual Employment Plan (IEP) is developed, and the plan is updated and monitored as the customer works toward their employment goal. The Employment and Training Specialist is the case manager and acts as a liaison between the customer and training activities personnel. The case manager will initiate paperwork to enroll the customer in appropriate activities and establish needs related payments and supportive services. In concert with the customer, the case manager reviews and provides access to an Individual Training Account or On-the-Job Training. The case manager tracks the progress of the customer, which is noted in the IEP. Upon completion of training and obtaining employment, case management is also provided to ensure retention in employment.

9. MOUs or operational agreements are in place between partners for daily operations.

Operational agreements are in place between partners at Worknet ERC that identify the policies and procedures for daily operations. The Worknet Leadership Team developed and approved an Orientation for partners covering policies and procedures for daily operations. Individuals representing partners at the Worknet ERC receive an orientation that includes the policies and procedures for daily operations. The partner staff and manager/supervisor of Worknet ERC providing the orientation both acknowledge in writing that the orientation was completed.

10. Information sharing and customer confidentiality agreements exist.

As part of the MOU agreement, a Release of Information and confidentiality agreement is in place. Some partners have requirements that call for an additional release to be signed in order for the client information to be shared. The Information Survey completed by the customer on their initial visit to the center includes a consent to share information to document eligibility, and assist the individual in seeking and obtaining employment services. A confidentiality agreement exists between EDD and partners who access their CalJobs data bank, Employer Contact Management System and PASS, which is a participant case management system. Department of Workforce Investment staff, at hiring, also sign a confidentiality agreement.

11. A description of all employer services is included in the business plan, including strategies for making the information available to employers.

The Dept. of WI as the One-Stop Operator contracted with Lori Strumpf, a nationally renowned consultant in One-Stop Services, to facilitate a workgroup that developed a plan to provide services to businesses. The group identified a matrix of system wide services available for businesses. Some of the services identified are recruitment, screening, referrals, retention, customized training, on-the-job training, labor market information, workshops, interview space, consultation services, assessment services, and a Business Services representative as a single point of contact for Workforce information and services. The workgroup developed a vision, mission and goals.

The Vision is: “To be the business solution for all businesses in Merced County to meet their workforce needs.”

The Mission is: “To provide access to and customize delivery of a wide array of quality services for businesses that meet their workforce needs.”

The Goals are:

- Increase the involvement of workforce development as an economic development strategy
- Increase efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery to businesses that meet their workforce needs now and into the future
- Increase communication with and personalized service to business to identify skill needs/gaps and build ways to address them
- Increase awareness and relevancy of the system through focused marketing so business use Worknet as their first choice for getting their workforce needs (supply) met
- Increase ease of access to the entire development system for businesses
- Increase the business community’s awareness of the Youth Employability Card and encourage business to participate in requiring students to present the card when applying for work.

A strategy for accomplishing these goals has been developed and will be reviewed periodically. The strategies are as follows:

- Create a single point of contact by collaboration with partners who provide services to employers to ensure that there is not duplication and that the employers receive the appropriate service.
- Work in concert with Economic Development professional partners to assess employer needs and address them.
- Provide excellent customer service and respond in a timely manner to all business inquiries or needs.
- Develop a Marketing Plan to heighten awareness to employers about the single point of contact for business needs.

12. A customer assessment process exists, including skill, aptitude, interest, and needs assessment.

In addition to an initial assessment to identify what services the customer is in need of, a customer may access a number of comprehensive assessments. The Office Proficiency Assessment and Certification (OPAC) software tests individual skill and proficiency in Microsoft Applications. JobSkills Software tests skill levels for a variety of software applications utilized in the Clerical and Industrial fields. The SAGE (System of Assessment and Group Evaluation) developed by PESCO International tests academic skills (reasoning, math, language); aptitudes (general learning, verbal, numerical, spatial, form perception, clerical perception, motor coordination, finger dexterity, manual dexterity, eye-hand-foot coordination and color discrimination. Learning styles, work attitudes, temperaments and work ethics can also be assessed through the SAGE system. A version for the visually impaired is available for customers with special needs.

Paper and pencil assessment tools available to customers are the Job Interest Inventory, Wide Range Interest and Opinion Test (WRIOT), Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), and Ideas Interest Inventory. The assessment portfolio completed by the customer includes information on education/training, work history, personal budget, childcare, legal, transportation, and family issues. The information in the portfolio, combined with test results, and a personal interview complete the needs assessment.

13. Has established a referral process that is customer focused.

The Worknet referral process is included in the partner MOU's with the process being refined by the Worknet Leadership Team. A common referral form is used with the exception of agencies where health information requires a more specific definition of the information to be released. The referral process is a contact by telephone to the appropriate individual at an agency while the customer is at Worknet ERC. The customer is able to schedule an appointment, receive the required information, or have questions answered without leaving the building. A copy of the referral is sent with the customer that identifies the agency and address, reason for referral, contact person and name of staff from the referring agency. Worknet ERC staff referring the customer maintains a copy of the referral for follow-up.

Organizational Profile

P.1. Organizational Description

Describe your organization's business environment and your key relationships with customers, suppliers, and other partners.

P.1.a. Organizational Environment

What are your organization's main products and/or services? Include a description of how they are delivered to customers.

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 envisioned a system where local elected officials, businesses, and public partners work together to shape a broader workforce development system that would result in increased efficiency and effectiveness. In Merced County the system is called Worknet. Under the WIA, accountability would no longer be just to the Department of Labor (DOL) or auditors, but to the customer and to the system. Requirements were new and introduced new challenges. Clearly the WIA presented a strong commitment to fundamentally refocus the entire system towards customer service and performance accountability.

In preparation of the new Act and its requirements, the Merced Chief Local Elected Officials (CLEO) and the Merced County Board of Supervisors created the Workforce Investment Board (WIB) on May 16, 2000. Merced County was designated as a Workforce Investment Area and implemented the Workforce Investment Act July 1, 2000, replacing the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) in providing federal job training programs to economically disadvantaged, unemployed individuals, and youth; access to information, referral to community resources, training, and job placement services. Merced County has had a long history of cooperation and collaboration among the various partners in the local Workforce Development System, first with the Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA), followed by the JTPA. Therefore, implementation of the WIA served to further enhance the level of cooperation and collaboration that already existed in the community.

Other aspects of the WIA included the promotion and development of seamless systems, collaboration and integration of services in education and employment, universal access to job search and labor market information, program flexibility and simplicity of program access, and decrease and elimination of duplicate services. Collaboration, Consolidation, Universal Access, Core Measures, Intensive Training, Mandatory Partners, "One-Stop Center" and "No Wrong Door", were just a few of the new terminologies staff, partners, customers and other stakeholders began to learn.

The WIB designated the Department of Workforce Investment (Dept. of WI), formerly called the Private Industry Training Department (PITD), as the One-Stop Operator. The Dept. of WI was faced with not only learning a different philosophy, but with also educating and training staff, customers, partners, and stakeholders. To acquire the foundation on which the new Act would stand, a solid and committed staff would have to be developed. Therefore, management, line staff, partners, education, and the business community worked in collaboration with a clear understanding that the transition would take time. To facilitate the process the Dept. of WI set up a series of training opportunities for staff, managers, community members, educators, the business community and other stakeholders.

Training, planning, open communication, feedback, follow-up, and an evaluation process for effectiveness were essential elements in accomplishing the transition from the JTPA to the WIA.

There are two functions the Dept. of WI is responsible for and they are:

- 1. One-Stop Operator:** As the WIB designated One-Stop Operator the Dept. of WI functions in collaboration with mandated partners and voluntary agencies to provide a wide array of employment and training opportunities with no fee to the customer. There are four primary functions provided: Core, Intensive, Training and Business Services.
- 2. WIA Title I Administration:** The Dept. of WI provides administration and direct support services to all WIA funded programs and functions to include: Marketing, Performance Excellence/Customer Service, Labor Market Information, Fiscal and Management Information Systems, and Information Technology.

Merced County Worknet System: The Worknet system has three primary customers: youth, employers and jobseekers. Partners, Stakeholders, Local Elected Officials, Economic Development Agencies, Chambers of Commerce, and local taxpayers (community residents and businesses) represent internal and external customers. A comprehensive One-Stop Worknet Employment Resource Center (ERC) located in Merced, with two affiliate sites operating in Los Banos and Livingston. Only the Merced Worknet Employment Resource Center is applying for certification. Each Center provides Core, Intensive, and Training Services as required under WIA. Worknet has a Business Services Unit in Merced, which provides services to both the Los Banos and Livingston areas. Customers can receive services at any one of the locations.

- **Core Services** are available to all customers and include: Orientation to services, skills assessment, job search and placement assistance, labor market information, access to job search equipment (telephones, fax machines, copier, and computers), adjustable tables and software for customers with special needs, communication system for deaf and hard of hearing customers (TTY Relay Service), access to eligibility for intensive and training services; information on availability of supportive services—such as assistance with transportation, childcare, reimbursement payments for tools, uniforms, Department of Motor Vehicle printouts, physicals, inoculations, tests, application fees, haircuts, books, multi-agency referral process, performance and program cost of service providers, and filing unemployment insurance claims.
- **Intensive Services** are available to eligible customers and include: Comprehensive and specialized career assessment, an Individual Employment Development Plan, individual and group counseling, career planning, and case management. In addition, those eligible may receive supportive services previously identified in Core Services.
- **Training Services** are available to customers who have received one Intensive Service and have elected to pursue training. Customer choice is the focus. To ensure that customers make an informed decision, they are provided with information about the local labor market, and are also provided with an occupational assessment to ensure that their job skills will be marketable in the local labor market. Customers select their training from the Eligible Training Provider List and at the same time activate their Individual Training Account. The customer is also eligible for assistance with supportive services including transportation, childcare, reimbursement payments for tools, uniforms, Department of Motor Vehicle printouts, physicals, inoculations, tests, application fees, haircuts, and books.

- **Business Services** are targeted to the business community and provide skilled candidates for available jobs, recruitment and placement assistance, information on Employer Tax Credits, Enterprise Zone Vouchers, Rapid Response assistance and information, incentives for providing On-the-Job Training (OJT), and referral to community resources and additional training services.

What is your organizational context/culture? Include your purpose, vision, mission, and values, as appropriate.

The Worknet Leadership Team (WLT) provides broad oversight for Worknet and has representation from all of the WIA mandatory partners and voluntary partners. The WLT meets at least monthly, and more often if required, to review customer usage, customer satisfaction data, customer needs, and services provided. They have established goals and objectives with timelines for completion.

Using the WIB’s Mission and Vision statement as a foundation, the WLT, developed the Worknet system’s Mission and Vision statement.

VISION: “Worknet – the premier system for workforce solutions – delivers a skilled, competitive workforce that ensures a diverse and prosperous economy in Merced County.”

MISSION: “The Mission of the Merced County Worknet One-Stop System is to respond to the needs of our business community, jobseekers, and students through an integrated workforce development system that enhances our community’s quality of life.”

The following core values were also established:

Integrity	Customer Service
Ethical Behavior	Growth
Teamwork	Results
Partnership	

What is your employee profile? Include educational levels, workforce and job diversity, bargaining units, use of contract employees, and special safety requirements, as appropriate.

There are fifty-six employees who staff the Worknet ERC. The Dept. of WI provides indirect and direct employee services with thirty employees that support the daily operations of the Worknet ERC. The Director, Secretary II, 2 Automation Systems Analysts, a Marketing Specialist, and Fiscal/MIS Supervisor provide indirect services to the Worknet Employment Resource Center. Staff providing direct services from the Dept. of WI are the Assistant Director, 1 Program Manager, 2 Supervising Specialists, 14 Employment & Training Specialists, 4 Assessment Technicians, 1 Assessment Technician III, and 1 Typist Clerk II. The remaining twenty-six employees represent the other 12 Worknet partners who rotate staff into the ERC to provide core services as outlined in the Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with the WIB.

The other 12 partners, in addition to Dept. of WI, who also provide Core “A” Services are: Merced Adult School, Merced College, State of California Department of Rehabilitation, Community Action Agency/Department of Workforce Development, Merced County Office of Education/ROP, Employment Development Department, Jobs for California Graduates, Central Valley Opportunity

Center, Experience Works, Housing Authority, Job Corps, and the Human Services Agency/Area on Aging Title V Program.

The Dept. of WI is the lead agency in the Worknet system. The majority of staff members providing day-to-day services do so as part of their regular assigned duties. All staff employed by the Dept. of WI has, at a minimum, a high school diploma. Several staff members at the management level possess graduate degrees, with the remainder of management possessing an undergraduate or Associates degree. Partner agencies all have minimum educational requirements that have been satisfied by their assigned staff.

An individual hired as an Employment & Training Specialist with the Dept. of WI, at a minimum, must have an Associates degree, or 60 units of college credits that include classes related to the field of Employment & Training. There are no college requirements for clerical or Assessment Technician positions. However, work experience in the areas of eligibility determination is a necessity for an Assessment Technician. Computer knowledge and general office skills are essential elements for clerical positions.

Employment & Training Specialists provide direct customer service in the Worknet ERC as either a Job Coach, Job Developer, Workshop Facilitator, Business Services Representative or Up Front Specialist. Assessment Technicians provide support to Employment & Training Specialists prior to and during Job Club/Job Search Workshops, and during Orientations and Skills Assessment. Assessment Technicians assist in resume development, conduct eligibility, and provide direct clerical support where appropriate. All employees hired by the Dept. of WI are County employees who successfully completed the employment process established by the County of Merced. There are no contracted employees in the Dept. of WI.

The Dept. of WI employees, and many of the partner agency employees, have union representation.

What are your major technologies, equipment and facilities?

Major technologies that provide support to the Worknet system include a Local Area Network (LAN) maintained by the Dept. of WI. Token ring and Ethernet protocol, one Novell file server, two Windows NT servers, and one Microsoft SQL server (version 6.5) are all part of the support package to the Worknet system directly or indirectly. The LAN is connected to a countywide area network (WAN) using T-1 links. The WAN is linked to an Internet Service Provider using a T-3 link. There are over 175 workstations on the WAN for personnel, partners, and customers in six different locations throughout Merced County.

Computer program environments currently in use are a combination of Windows 2000 and Windows 98. Worknet ERC staff have access to and are using Novell GroupWise 5.5 email and scheduling software. Employees are using MS Office 2000 productivity software. They are also using Microsoft Office 2000 productivity software. All employees are connected to the Internet and the Dept. of WI Intranet. A Computer Lab exists at each site that provides One-Stop services. Customers are able to look for employment via the Internet, develop a resume, register with CalJOBS, and obtain a skills certification in typing, ten key, or general office skills. The PESCO System of Assessment and Group Evaluation (SAGE) Lab provides customers an opportunity to obtain a Skills Assessment for a better employment match. The Plato Lab allows customers to upgrade their academic skills or prepare for a General Education Diploma (GED) certification.

In addition, the Dept. of WI maintains a video conferencing network that includes six Polycom video conferencing units. The Worknet ERC is linked with a Dept. of WI maintained Siemens-ROLM telephone system that includes call processing and voice mail.

Lap top computers and data/video projectors for PowerPoint presentations are available for use at the Worknet ERC. In addition, work stations, computers, and appropriate software were purchased to provide better service to handicapped and disabled customers.

The Worknet facility has a reception area, a computer lab with Internet access, a computer lab for assessment, and a third computer lab for basic skills improvement and GED preparation. There is a resource area with books, videos, and brochures for job seeker use, and an area with job postings, phone bank, FAX machine, copy machine, and tables where customers can complete applications or review the jobs listed in the newspapers. There are workspaces with computers for all of the partners.

What is the regulatory environment under which your organization operates? Include occupational health and safety regulations; accreditation requirements; and environmental, financial, and product regulations.

As the designated One-Stop Operator and a publicly funded organization, the Dept. of WI is highly regulated by local, state, and federal agencies to ensure accountability of tax dollars spent. The regulator at the Federal level is the DOL. The State level regulator is the Employment Development Department Office of Workforce Investment Division (WID). There is a yearly Programmatic and Fiscal /Procurement Monitoring conducted by the WID. The Local regulators include the Merced County Board of Supervisors, the Merced County Workforce Investment Board, and the Local Elected Officials for the City of Merced. The Dept. of WI is required to follow regulations established by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), and local police, fire, and health and safety codes. Partners also have their own unique regulatory requirements.

P.1.b. Organizational Relationships

What are your key customer groups and/or market segments? What are their key requirements for your products and services? Include how these requirements differ among customer groups and/or market segments, as appropriate.

The primary customers of the Worknet system identified by the WLT are employers, jobseekers and youth. Services and information can be accessed at the Worknet ERC or via the Internet.

Employers receive services from several of the partners including applicant screening and referrals of skilled employees. A Worknet system goal is to provide a single point of contact for employers and jobseekers. Welfare to Work and Work Opportunity Tax Credit information, Enterprise Zone Tax Credit Vouchering, On-the-Job Training, Upgrade OJTs, Customized Training, and Paid Work Experience are also provided. Rapid Response is a service available to both employers and jobseekers when a business is closing or down sizing. Rapid Response assists employers with placing affected employees in other jobs. Information about Unemployment Insurance, Consumer Credit Counseling and Worknet services to aid in job search activities is provided. Where appropriate, staff travel to the location to provide an orientation and overview of services.

Jobseekers use the Worknet system to search for employment, improve basic skills, develop or enhance interviewing skills, to enhance or develop their work maturity or “Soft Skills”, which often aid them in Job Search, employment and retention. Workshops are available in Job Search, Interviewing, Resume Writing, and Dressing for Success. In addition, jobseekers have access to information via the Internet on employers hiring locally, statewide and nationally, and have the ability to contact those employers via the telephone and email. The Plato Lab provides jobseekers an opportunity to upgrade their basic education skills, or prepare for their GED in English or Spanish. Services are provided via the computer with the assistance of a part-time instructor. Occupational skills assessment is provided through PESCO, a computer program that provides job seekers with personalized reading, math, and language skill levels, aptitudes, and interests in specific occupations, thereby better preparing them with pertinent information for job search.

Employers and jobseekers access services through the Worknet system. Although they have different needs, they also have commonalities in their service requirements. Both customer groups require professional, timely, accurate information from knowledgeable, innovative and courteous staff.

Youth services are provided by the Youth Contractors—Merced County Office of Education for in-school youth, and Jobs for California Graduates (JCG) for out of school youth.

What are your most important types of suppliers and dealers and your most important supply chain requirements? What are your key supplier and customer partnering relationships and communication mechanisms?

The key suppliers are also the key partners for the Worknet system and include education and training institutions, employers, all of the Worknet Partners, and the County of Merced. Through formal financial agreements or contracts the suppliers provide services to the customers in the Worknet system. Education and training institutions provide occupational skills training to customers and employers provide jobs, On-the-Job Training, Upgrade OJTs, and work experience.

Communication mechanisms used throughout the Worknet system utilize a multitude of sources; including the Internet, Intranet, telephones, fax, and teleconferencing, monthly group meetings, and working sessions. The WLT and staff use each as appropriate for the desired results.

P.2. Organizational Challenges

Describe your organization’s competitive environment, your key strategic challenges, and your system for performance improvement.

P.2.a. Competitive Environment

What is your competitive position? Include your relative size and growth in your industry and the numbers and types of competitors. What are the principal factors that determine your success relative to your competitors? Include any changes taking place that affect your competitive situation.

The Dept. of WI has provided over 25 years of employment and training services to the Merced community. The Worknet ERC was opened in 1995, and by 2000 had expanded to include all of the mandatory partners. Employment and training services are also available to the community at two additional Worknet affiliate locations, one in Los Banos and one in Livingston. California has 51

Workforce Investment Areas. Merced County does not compete with the neighboring One-Stop Centers for customers, but is in competition for state and federal discretionary funds. Over the years, the Dept. of WI has established a strong working relationship with other Local Workforce Investment Areas. Information and coordination of services has resulted in successful outcomes for joint customers. Joint research activities to help the Department of Labor and others better understand the region has resulted in the California Workforce Association's cooperative venture in developing a Core "A" tracking system.

There are two primary competitors in the workforce investment system that market aggressively to workforce development organizations and/or the customers they serve. One is Associated Computer Solutions, which recently purchased Lockheed Martin, and is currently operating several One-Stops across the country. The other is the privately owned personnel agency's that offer placement services for job seekers and Employers. There is also potential competition from labor union organizations such as the AFL-CIO because they are contemplating developing their own One-Stop systems.

Last year, over 42,615 customers received services through the Worknet system. During that time customer activity averaged 3,551 customers per month. In the first four months of 2003, the monthly average is 5,232 customers, an increase of 1,681. To meet the growing demands of employers and jobseekers, staff was increased, computers and software were purchased, additional training dollars were allocated, and staff training was provided for Career Planning, Skills Assessment, and Job Search. Memorandums of Understanding were developed or amended to allow for additional services to the Worknet ERC.

The success of Worknet is a result of its effective collaboration with partners and suppliers, and its commitment to excellence. The WLT has developed Strategic Goals and Objectives to further focus and strengthen the partnerships. The WLT will be developing an action plan to ensure that the goals, objectives, and opportunities for improvement are being addressed. The plan will further identify, implement, and ensure that programs and systems are in place to reach Performance Excellence. The WLT is committed to developing staff and management, working to achieve excellent performance in every area of the organization, maintaining a clear and consistent message on customer focus and service, and keeping all stakeholders engaged in the process. A major step in the commitment to excellence was applying to become a Certified One-Stop Center.

P.2.b. Strategic Challenges

What are your key strategic challenges? Include operational, human resources, business, and global challenges, as appropriate.

In the recent Merced County Workforce Assessment Report, Phase II, prepared by the Chabin Concepts Team, it was determined that Merced County has specific and critical challenges with its workforce. Double-digit unemployment continues to plague Merced County. For the last 20 years the Merced County unemployment rate has been significantly higher than the state, San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Madera Counties. In January 2002, the rate was 18.2%, dropping as much as 10% in the summer at the height of the harvest season. The County suffered economically by the closure of Castle Air Force Base in 1995, followed by the relocation of Farmers Insurance Group in 1998. Employment associated with agriculture was unaffected, then and now. Other challenges include a lack of industry to support workforce, a low skilled workforce and a young workforce (with the lowest median age of 29). Technology is involved in almost every aspect of the operation of businesses today. Technical skills by current employees along with basic job ready skills of entry-

level employees have been major concerns for local Employers. In order for Merced County to be competitive it must improve the technical literacy, and critical decision-making skills of its current and emerging workforce.

Other strategic challenges include the high numbers of adults who lack a H.S. Diploma or GED, the mobility of migrant workers, shortage of housing, lack of affordable housing, salaries not competitive with other areas and the resulting emigration of highly educated, highly skilled professionals, resistance to change, and the current unstable economy.

Although determined to be an undercount by the Department of Finance, the 2000 Census, an increase in population of 18% from 178,403 to 210,554. The Merced County Association of Governments projects that the population will increase 30% (from 210,554 to 273,923) by 2010. According to the Employment Development Department (EDD), the estimated labor force in Merced County was 84,900 as of July 2002.

An operational challenge, common across the nation, is that mandatory partners are required by law to participate in cost sharing agreements to support the infrastructure of Worknet. This requires partners to pay for rent, utilities and other infrastructure costs as it applies to their proportional share. However, (with the exception of the Dept. of WI) dollars are not designated in the individual partner's budget for this expense. The result is an unfunded mandate that, while required by law, does not include a financial provision.

Another challenge faced by Worknet is the California budget deficit that will impact every participating partner. Declining funds will equate to less dollars for services and staff. In spite of these funding challenges the WLT maintains a strong commitment to effectively and efficiently serve the Merced community.

P.2.c. Performance Improvement System

How do you maintain an organizational focus on performance improvement? Include your approach to systematic evaluation and improvement of key processes and to fostering organizational learning and knowledge sharing.

An example of organizational focus on performance improvement is the current Worknet ERC Day Pass which has an area for customer comments and when a reply is requested, or dissatisfaction is noted, appropriate staff from the Worknet ERC follow up with the customer. This information is kept in a data- base and is reviewed by the Leadership Team at its meetings. Comment Cards are being developed and will be used to obtain additional customer feedback. They will be available at all times so that it will be convenient for customer use.

As the designated One-Stop operator, the Merced County Dept. of WI recognized the importance of valuing its employees, and made a commitment to improve their satisfaction and development in the workplace. After completing a facilitated organization assessment, Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Workgroups were formed to address opportunities for improvement identified through the assessment. Each team was comprised of management and line staff with different areas of focus. Teamwork at all levels of the Dept. of WI helped to strengthen the organization's commitment to Continuous Quality Improvement, and has since been mirrored by the Worknet Leadership Team. To ensure team success, the goal of each team is well defined and team progress is monitored through documented Team Charter/Action Plans. Each team is accountable for its work and

outcomes. The WLT values and embraces the Continuous Quality Improvement process to address performance issues.

As with all valued measurements, the effectiveness of the Worknet system is measured quantitatively and qualitatively. Continuous Improvement is fundamental to the Worknet system. The WLT has and continues to use the mechanisms in place developed by the One-Stop Operator to continuously refine and improve business practices and response to feedback provided through the use of the Day Pass Customer Service and Satisfaction Survey Data System. Qualitative factors that indicate the effectiveness of the WLT include:

- Continued and consistent messages throughout the Worknet system on quality objectives.
- Review and response to customer feedback.
- Proven commitment to continuous improvement.

Quantitative measures of the impact of services provided to the community through the Worknet system:

- Participant & Employer Satisfaction Performance measures.
- Credential Attainments (Training & Education).
- Entered Employments (Unsubsidized).
- Retention.
- Increased earnings.

Another important tool in Quality Improvement is communication, whether formal or informal, communication must flow upward as well as downward to have staff buy-in that ultimately leads to staff driven action. To support this process there is a commitment for the Worknet ERC to have biweekly staff meetings and all partners are encouraged to attend. All parties are encouraged to bring forth issues for discussion. Items that may require specific actions are brought to the WLT for further review.

Baldrige Based Criteria

Leadership

1.a. Clear direction (consistent) (mission)

There exists a clear, well-articulated Mission Statement for the organization.

The Dept. of WI is the lead agency and One-Stop Operator in the Worknet system and for the Workforce Investment Area. As the One-Stop Operator, the Dept. of WI coordinated several day-long work sessions to create the WLT and begin the Worknet Certification Challenger Award Application process developed by the Merced County WIB.

Through a facilitated assessment process the WLT evaluated the Worknet system using the statutory requirements of the Worknet Certification Challenger Award Application and the Baldrige Criteria, identified areas of deficiency and developed an action plan. The beginning point of the action plan was to develop and organize the WLT, and devise a process to build strategic goals and objectives. The assessment process identified the organization's customers, suppliers, and the benefit they received through collaborating. Worknet's mission, vision, goals, and core values were also established.

As a result of these initial meetings and work sessions the WLT was able to build a cohesive leadership group, gain needed understanding of their roles, and make a concerted effort to focus on Worknet ERC customers and activities. The Mission and Vision statements reflect the collective goals and collaborative efforts of the WLT.

Mission Statement: The Mission of the Merced County Worknet One-Stop System is to respond to the needs of our business community, jobseekers and students through an integrated workforce development system that enhances our community's quality of life.

Vision Statement: Worknet – the premier system for workforce solutions – delivers a skilled, competitive workforce that ensures a diverse and prosperous economy in Merced County.

Each member of the WLT has received a copy of the Mission and Vision Statements to share with their individual organizations. On Friday, January 31, 2003 the Mission and Vision Statements were shared with Worknet ERC staff and partners.

To further promote the introduction and staff/customer familiarity with the Worknet Mission and Vision statements, the WLT decided to place both statements on all Worknet ERC correspondence.

1.b. Quality One-Stop staff (continuous learning)

A formal education/employee development plan exists. If certification is required for certain employee groups, those certifications exist and are current.

Currently the only position that requires certification at the Worknet ERC is the instructor for Basic Education instruction in the PLATO Lab. Teachers in the state of California have to pass the California Basic Education Skills Test (CBEST), and the instructor has passed the test and also possesses an Adult School Credential. Depending upon the job classification some college may be

required. However, it is the intent of the Worknet Leadership Team to work with all staff assigned to the Worknet ERC to become certified as an Employment & Training Workforce Development Professional using the model of the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (NAWDP). In order to accomplish this goal all Worknet ERC staff would be expected to successfully complete training in the Twelve Competency areas identified by the NAWDP:

- History & Structure of the Workforce Development System
- Career Development Process
- Labor Market Information
- Diversity
- Customer Service
- Program Management
- Interpersonal Relations
- Technology
- General “Helping Skills”
- Job Search Skills
- Job Keeping Skills
- Job Preparation Skills

The standards and curriculum for staff training is under development and the process will be completed by October 2003. In addition, a quarterly Quality Review Work Meeting will be held to ensure that both the WLT and staff are able to effectively communicate customer needs, staff and management expectations, access “best practices,” and make recommendations for changes where appropriate.

Also, to promote and educate partners about services available in the Worknet ERC, a Worknet Cross Informing/Cross Training Form was developed. This form will serve as a practical instrument in helping partners learn about the other partner services. Further it will allow for partners to feel more confident when interacting with customers in the Resource area (Core A services). New partners are encouraged to complete the form within the first month on site.

An Orientation of Worknet Policies and Procedures will be provided to assist partners in learning about daily activities and expectations of staff assigned to the Worknet ERC. The managers of the Worknet ERC will provide the tour and orientation to newly assigned staff. In order to track that staff have received this orientation, a form has been developed for staff to sign upon completion of the orientation. A copy of the form will be given to staff for their records and a copy kept in a partner information file maintained by Worknet ERC management.

1.c. The “right” organization and a well-defined organization

There is an organizational chart. The organizational structure is appropriate for the organization. All leadership positions are filled.

As the designated One-Stop Operator, the Dept. of WI is responsible for monitoring and maintaining the day-to-day operations of the facility with direction from the WLT. This includes but is not limited to, staffing the PESCO Lab (Sage Assessment System), Computer Lab, Resource Area, Plato Lab (Educational Assistance), all Core “A” Universal Access Services, Intensive Training, and

Training. The three Leadership positions currently at the Worknet ERC are filled and consist of a Program Manager and two Employment and Training Supervisors.

Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) exist between the WIB and all of the mandatory partners and volunteer agencies. In the MOUs each partner agreed to provide core services, work a certain number of hours, and provide a level of staffing. The hours of participation by partners at the Worknet ERC vary from 3 hours a week to 40 hours a week.

The Worknet Leadership Team developed a Core Services Matrix that identifies the core services that are provided by all of the participating partners. Areas of services were listed, with some partners appearing in more than one area because of the multiple services they offer. This visual aid proved to be very helpful in confirming and clarifying services provided by Partners, and those performed specifically at the Worknet ERC.

1.d. Customer focus

There is an understanding/definition of the customer(s). A customer service-training program exists.

The WLT has defined the Worknet ERC customer as jobseekers, employers, and youth. Training has been made available to staff on customer service, with invitations extended to partners. For example, training on Customer Service and Staff Motivation was provided by Paul Clayton, a consultant with the California Workforce Association, and was offered to all of the partners.

Staff training will be provided on an ongoing basis as it relates to customer service. In addition, all Worknet ERC staff will participate in obtaining certification using the model of the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (NAWDP) to become a Certified Workforce Professional. Customer service is one of the competency areas that all staff will have to pass for certification.

1.e. Focus on collaboration

All of the mandatory partners participate at the Worknet ERC on a regular basis. The rate of cross-referral among the partners is satisfactory relative to benchmark organizations. The degree of information sharing among Worknet partners is adequate.

Each partner has a signed MOU which provides specific information on how the partner will operate at the Worknet ERC. Due to current budget problems impacting the state, one partner (Merced College) has had to reduce its hours of participation. All other partners have maintained a level of visibility and participation at the Worknet ERC.

In addition, each partner has maintained their commitment to participate in regularly scheduled WLT meetings and work sessions. Through this level of commitment, the WLT has been able to improve and maintain communication among partners and quickly identify any problems or concerns that may exist and need to be addressed.

A referral process was developed and the referral form was provided in the MOUs. The WLT has assigned a workgroup to review this process and provide improvement recommendations to the WLT. The WLT will ensure that the referral process is customer focused and will provide Worknet customers with the best possible seamless service. It is anticipated that the review,

recommendations, and systematic implementation of the Worknet referral process will be completed by October 2003.

1.f. Support for continuous quality improvement

A well-defined CQI plan and program exists. Staff are trained on the principles of CQI. There is a commitment to the CQI process.

In 1998 the Dept. of WI embraced the concept of Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI), and Total Quality Improvement. The Baldrige criteria, while not a requirement for One-Stop Providers, was continuously used as a reference guide for Best Practices. As WIA regulations solidified and were distributed to the Local Workforce Investment Areas, the Dept. of WI invested in training two staff members to become California Awards for Performance Excellence (CAPE) Examiners. Other staff were trained as “Team and Work Group Facilitators”. In the early development stages, surveys were sent to staff asking for feedback on how management was performing in areas such as leadership, strategic planning, and customer service. In addition, the survey asked about issues such as safety and communication.

Based on the results of the surveys work teams within the Dept. of WI were established. Each team developed a Charter, which provided clear guidelines and expectations, and made focusing on the issues easier. The teams were made up of both line staff and managers. Meetings were held on a biweekly or monthly basis to address issues, review the team’s progress, and provide feedback to staff and managers.

The first efforts of the Continuous Improvement Teams focused on issues, such as customer service and satisfaction data collection, improving technology for customers and staff, staff training, standardizing department program forms and work processes, communications throughout the organization, and policies and procedures. This early focus has benefited the Worknet ERC and the WLT in developing their Strategic Goals to improve and enhance customer service and programs.

1.g. Supplier certification

Key performance factors are used in the evaluation of suppliers and partners.

Each partner in the Worknet ERC have different performance measures or evaluation tools that determines their effectiveness. The Merced County Dept. of WI has 17 performance measures. Fifteen of those are actual performance measures with the other two focusing on Customer Satisfaction. The Dept. of WI must meet or exceed the state established performance measures in order to remain the One-Stop operator and administrative entity.

The following are partners who also have performance measures such as cost per placement, entered employment, credential rate, goal attainment and retention: Employment Development Department, Central Valley Opportunity Center, Department of Rehabilitation, Jobs for California Graduates, Department of Workforce Development (Community Action Agency), Job Corps, Experienced Works and the Area Agency on Aging.

In addition, each partner has specific or unique criteria for their particular industry; i.e., the educational partners in the Worknet system—Merced County Office of Education, Merced Adult School, and Merced College—all have to obtain and maintain Western Association of Schools and

Colleges (WASC) accreditation to continue to provide services to the community. Worknet ERC and partner staff will also work toward becoming certified in the twelve identified competencies using the model of the NAWDP.

Customers interested in enrolling into a training program are asked to review the Eligible Training Providers List (ETPL) for State and WIB approved training providers. The ETPL provides information on school performance, including number of students enrolled, completion rate, and obtained employment rate.

2. Strategic Planning

2.a. Well-defined

There exists a well-defined strategic plan with measurable objectives.

The WLT, previously known as the One-Stop Steering Committee, worked in collaboration with the WIB in developing its Five-Year Strategic Plan July 1, 2000, for the Local Workforce Investment Area. Those areas of concentration initially adopted through the development and implementation of that plan are the foundation from which the Leadership Team is building. Under the WIA, services are provided to Employers, Jobseekers and Youth utilizing the County's One-Stop Delivery System. The Merced County WIB developed the following goals:

- Become an active advocacy voice and take political action on workforce development issues at the local, state and national level.
- Respond to business needs by targeting 3-5 of the area's industries and work with those specific industries to develop emerging and current worker skills and assist the industry to develop worker retention strategies. Assist the specific industries with developing plans to expand and attract new workers.
- Establish the WIB as an economic development partner by developing workforce strategies aligned to community economic development initiatives.
- Influence the education system, through building formal relationships, to become responsive to business skill needs and work to design and implement strategies that promote student achievement and graduation.

The WLT met September 3-4, 2002, and prepared the foundation for its Strategic Goals to be accomplished over the next three years. The Strategic Goals are in alignment with those of the WIB. Goal number one, although identified, remains incomplete as the group awaits additional information from the WIB to identify industry clusters.

Goal One:

Develop an industry-sector based approach to organizing program services to ensure that services meet labor market needs and that jobseekers are fully prepared for the labor market, thereby increasing the number of jobseekers that are hired and retained in those industries by X%

Objective 1: Once the WIB has identified 3-5 targeted industries, communicate with Employers in those industries to identify needs; align employability and training curriculum to be responsive to those needs; promote jobs and occupations within those industries among the potential workforce; address the work ethic, basic skills needs, and language proficiency needs of each industry.

Timeline: Dependent on WIB selection.

Objective 2: Identify the industry sectors that are currently being targeted and the numbers being trained, the success of training and placement in employment (i.e., Health Care, Police Officer, etc.).

Timeline: Compare FY 2002 to FY 2003/Dependent on WIB selection.

Objective 3: Continued use and support of the Merced College Customer Service Academy.

Goal Two:

Promote school-based partnerships, including the elementary school level, to encourage youth so they enter middle school and high school with basic skills (reading and math) at grade level, thereby increasing the number of youth that matriculate/graduate.

Objective 1: Assist partners in marketing efforts so that more individuals access adult learning opportunities that will impact their children. This would be measured by: a) 10% increase in the enrollment in the Merced Adult School Community-Based English Tutoring Class, b) a 10% increase in businesses working with Merced Adult School and Merced College to provide English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for employees, and c) 10% increase in adults in Citizenship classes.

Timeline: Compare FY 2003 to FY 2004.

Objective 2: Promote the use of the Youth Employability Card (YEC) with youth and businesses. All partners would actively market and provide information. The Business Services Unit would explain the benefits and recruit new Employers to participate. This would be measured by a 20% increase in Employers participating. MCOE will encourage their younger youth participants to apply for the YEC for summer employment. A 20% increase in student participation is expected.

Timeline: Compare FY 2003 to FY 2004.

Objective 3: Gather the business community to clarify expectations and provide support necessary to increase the graduation rate; promote the numbers to youth as it relates to earning potential and the level of education attained-what do non-high school graduates compared to high school graduates earn throughout their lifetime.

Timeline: FY 2005.

Goal Three:

Improve educational levels of adults to increase skills needed for work and credential (high school diploma, GED, certificates).

Timeline: Compare FY 2003 to FY 2004.

Objective 1: Increase the number of adults in the workforce system by 10%.

Timeline: Compare FY 2003 to FY 2004.

Objective 2: Increase those who receive a credential by 5%.

Timeline: Compare FY 2003 to FY 2004.

Objective 3: Increase number of adults receiving GEDs by 5%.

Timeline: Compare FY 2003 to FY 2004.

Objective 4: Increase the number of adults receiving High School Diplomas by 5%.
Timeline: Compare FY 2003 to FY 2004.

Objective 5: Increase Merced College enrollment by 5%.
Timeline: Compare FY 2003 to FY 2004.

Goal Four:

Continue to develop and establish CQI strategies that move Worknet and the WLT to the next level of high performance and excellence by focusing on organizational development.

Objective 1: Saturate the Quality Standards as part of the organizations culture.
Timeline: Jan. 2003 and ongoing.

Objective 2: Successfully complete all portions of the Certification Packet/Process and obtain Certification from the WIB.
Timeline: Complete packet by Jun. 30, 2003.

Objective 3: Use the feedback report from the WIB to celebrate success and identify additional opportunities for improvement.
Timeline: Sep. 2003.

Goal Five:

Create a sustainable partnership among all workforce service providers that results in improved customer satisfaction with the systems services.

Objective 1: Create an information sharing “tool” that is used at all levels of the Worknet system (front desk and WLT) that assists workers and customers in identifying pathways and services through partner agencies that help them meet their goals.
Timeline: Mar. 30, 2003.

Objective 2: Create and nurture an effective communication process among WLT members to identify partner challenges and work together to resolve them; WLT communicate and message regularly what success across partners looks like; operationally common values within each agency and at every center.
Timeline: Jan. 2003 and ongoing.

Objective 3: Continued cross training of partners to ensure that all are knowledgeable about policies, procedures and services.
Timeline: Mar. 2, 2003 and ongoing.

2.b. Involvement of all constituents

Stakeholders possess knowledge of the elements of the strategic plan. There is documented evidence that all levels of the organization and all stakeholders participated in the development of the strategic plan.

The WLT has met as a unit and smaller groups from September 2002 through February 2003. A self-assessment was conducted in September to measure the status of the Worknet system in relation to the Certification Standards, and to develop an action plan to meet those standards. The action plan

consisted of priorities to be addressed and timelines for each priority. In addition, role clarification of the One-Stop Operator and partners was discussed and defined. A Matrix of services was developed and provided a strong visual aid of services provided by Worknet partners at the Worknet ERC.

The partners and stakeholders that participated in the work session where the Mission and Vision, Core Values, Strategic Goals and Objectives were developed are as follows: Al Peterson, Action Business Center (ABC); Larry Whatley, California State Department of Rehabilitation; Edgar Perez, Central Valley Opportunity Center; Bob Bittner, Employment Development Department; Barbara Brown, Experience Works; Rennise Ferraro, Housing Authority; Peter Abejtia, Job Corps; Richard Chavez, Jobs for California Graduates; Carole Roberds, Merced Adult School; Karyn Weins, Merced College; Laura Gongora, Merced County Community Action Agency/Department of Workforce Development; Holly Newlon, Merced County Office of Education, and Andrea Baker and Ed McLaughlin, Dept. of WI.

2.c. Customer focus (needs-now and in the future)

A formal customer needs assessment has been performed. The results of the needs assessment are addressed in the strategic plan.

Jobseekers and Youth:

Customer satisfaction and needs assessment is currently collected via the “Day Pass”. Customers complete a Day Pass each time they enter the facility. There are two types of Day Pass, one for the “First time” customer, and one for the “Repeat” customer. The Day Pass provides the customer an opportunity to comment on services, and make recommendations for additional services. In addition, they are able to inform us if we are, or are not meeting their current service needs. Through the use of the Day Pass customers are able to convey their displeasure with software and aging equipment. As a result, additional software was added to computers, and more computers were purchased. The WLT is working on another means to obtain customer feedback through the use of a Customer “Comment Card” which will be used throughout the Worknet ERC in conjunction with the Day Pass. Information will be reviewed and addressed by the WLT.

Employers:

Worknet partners are currently in discussion to determine the best way to identify and address employer needs. Business Retentions Expansion Surveys were used in 2000 and 2002. An idea that needs consensus and further development is to have Industry Specific Forums facilitated by Worknet partners. This would be used as an avenue to listen and learn from Employers, provide information about available resources, and assist in providing solutions.

2.d. Define metrics (are they measured)

Outcomes and a method to measure them are identified in the plan. Milestones exist for achievement of outcomes.

Each of the Strategic Goals includes objectives and timelines for completion, or have been determined as an “ongoing” activity. The measurement to be utilized will be a comparison of yearly data and a percentage ranking. The WLT plans to outline and develop an action plan and identify milestones within that plan.

2.e. Implemented (organizational behavior)

There is evidence that the strategic plan is being implemented in the organization.

The infrastructure for the Strategic Plan was developed by the WLT and has its full support. The Mission, Vision and Core Values have been developed and deployed. Goals and Objectives will be reviewed as determined by timelines. Cross Training of Partners, Cross Referral Process, Operational Agreement, Worknet Policies and Procedures, the Individual Training Plan, the development of a Staff Certification Process modeled after the NAWDP, and the development of a “Fact Sheet” are all examples of areas of the Strategic Plan that have already been, or are in the process of implementation into the daily operations of the Worknet ERC. The WLT is committed to continuously reviewing and assessing the plan and its progress.

2.f. Consistent with available resources

The organization has sufficient resources to implement the plan.

Implementation of the Strategic Plan does not require specific funding or additional resources. Collaboration and review of information available will be essential to accomplishing the goals presented. Primary partners responsible for providing data and information to determine if goals and objectives have been met will be Merced College, Merced Adult School, Merced County Office of Education, Dept. of WI, and the Employment Development Department.

The assistance with marketing the Youth Employability Card to the business community could result in some minimal costs. The emphasis is on educating the business community and obtaining their participation. This requires presentations and individual meetings, and Worknet and WIB members participating in Chamber events.

2.g. Includes continuous quality improvement plan

The strategic plan includes an emphasis on CQI.

In each area of the plan there is emphasis on the customer, quality, and improvement. Through comparison of year-to-year data, the WLT will be able to determine the effectiveness of the plan, and make adjustments as needed.

The importance is shown in that one of the five goals addresses CQI. Goal number four is: Continue to develop and establish CQI strategies that move Worknet and the WLT to the next level of high performance and excellence by focusing on organizational development.

Objective 1: Saturate the Quality Standards as part of the organization’s culture.

Timeline: Jan. 2003 and Ongoing.

Objective 2: Successfully complete all portions of the Certification Packet/Process and obtain Certification from the WIB.

Timeline: Complete packet by Jun. 30, 2003.

Objective 3: Use the feedback report from the WIB to celebrate success and identify additional opportunities for improvement.

Timeline: Sep. 2003.

3. Customer and Market Focus

3.a. Customer needs surveyed

There is evidence that customer needs have been surveyed/identified.

Regular customer feedback is critical to any CQI program. By gathering, aggregating, and analyzing customer feedback, Worknet ERC staff have shown steady improvement in meeting customer needs. The WLT has defined customers as jobseekers, Employers and youth. While all Worknet stakeholders are critical to the success of our organization, the WLT wanted to identify the end users, their needs, expectations, and preferences in order to design products and services to meet those requirements.

Worknet uses a variety of formal and informal methods to listen and learn from customers, and determine key customer requirements. Worknet ERC staff has direct access to a wide range of information that determine the needs and requirements of customers. Analysis of customer barriers to employment, homelife, work history, education, and economic situation allows staff to determine and address customer needs and requirements. Customer requirements are also validated through formal methods such as customer satisfaction surveys and through the monitoring of processes including the Individual Employment Plan (IEP) completed for each enrolled participant. The IEP delineates customer needs and requirements as well as a service plan to address those issues.

Customer requirements gathered through informal methods are discussed at Worknet ERC staff, workgroup/team, WLT and management meetings, as well as in written methods via email, memos, and the Intranet and Internet. Customer requirements are revised as needed in order to streamline processes, develop products and services, and revise/develop program policies and procedures to meet those requirements.

The WLT has implemented a Customer Satisfaction Strategy, which includes satisfaction surveys administered to customers at two key service points; initial contact at the Worknet ERC (Worknet Customer Service/Satisfaction Day Pass data system), and completion of Core Services. The Customer Comment Card is in development to obtain additional customer feedback.

3.b. Customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is satisfactory relative to benchmark organizations, and demonstrates improvement over time; internal organizational goals are established and achieved.

The WLT has acknowledged the need for implementing a formal customer service and satisfaction determination/evaluation system. Two Continuous Improvement Teams were formed to develop processes that would address customer satisfaction issues.

One team developed a two-point customer survey satisfaction strategy to elicit input from our customers and assess their level of satisfaction. The two points of customer survey contact include: 1) Initial Service Contact Survey (Worknet Day Pass) which is completed by customers at the

comprehensive and affiliate sites; and 2) Core Services Survey, which is completed by all customers when enrolled into Intensive Job Search and/or Training Services after their IEP is developed.

The purpose of the surveys is to receive feedback from customers about their Worknet experience. Collected data are used to improve services and programs by obtaining customer information on areas requiring improvement, or to suggest a new area of service that can be provided. Worknet staff encourage customers to complete surveys by explaining the importance of their input, and how it drives the effort to continuously deliver and improve the quality of service they need, want and expect. There is follow-up on any areas where dissatisfaction has been noted.

A second team was formed to develop a formal initial customer contact satisfaction data tracking system that would capture customer satisfaction ratings and comments. The system also captures the number and types of Core Services being provided to and requested by our customers. The team interviewed key customer contact personnel at the Worknet ERC about existing data collection efforts and gathered samples of various data collection forms/systems from other Workforce Development agencies. Through this benchmark research effort the Worknet Customer Service and Satisfaction Day Pass system was developed and implemented in October 2000.

The Worknet Day Pass survey is a half sheet document designed to collect customer service, satisfaction, and referral data. Day Pass surveys are available at the Worknet ERC reception counter so there is always staff available to assist customers in completing the Day Pass survey. Survey questions are appropriate for the diverse educational levels of Worknet customers. The front side of the Day Pass is used for customer core service data and comments, while the reverse side is used for customers to rate their satisfaction indicators and make comments. Customers are asked to rate the following indicators: courtesy of staff, time it took to see a counselor, receipt of information needed, satisfaction with services, and referral of Worknet services to others.

Customers are asked to rate each of these areas using the rating scale of 1(Very Dissatisfied) to 10 (Very Satisfied) and a “yes” or “no” response for referral of services to others. Also included is an area for comments regarding customer ratings and/or suggestions about how Worknet services can be improved to better meet their needs. The collected information is entered into a web-based database, which is designed to tabulate customer service data, satisfaction ratings and record comments on a daily basis. Since the implementation of this process in 2000, the ratings have consistently remained between 9 and 10 as it relates to customer satisfaction.

The customer satisfaction surveys are reviewed along with the results in order to ensure that the information captured continues to hold high levels of reliability and validity. The WLT and staff review reports on a quarterly basis. Adjustments are made to the survey instrument and process to capture the most accurate information on customer needs and satisfaction. This is a very important part of the review process and allows for an accurate assessment of customer information.

Although we do have a data collection, review, and improvement process, we have not yet developed a systematic process for comparing our data with competitors or other Workforce Development agencies. We have requested and received customer satisfaction data from six neighboring counties with similar demographics, and are developing a review process with two of these counties. Also, we have been contacted by other Workforce Development agencies that have benchmarked our data collection system in efforts to develop and implement their own customer satisfaction data process.

Internal organizational goals have been established through the strategic planning process using the concept of CQI and an action plan will be developed in order to achieve those goals.

3.c. Results linked to strategic plan and continuous improvement

Customer satisfaction surveys result in actions taken through strategic planning.

A systematic approach to listening and learning from Worknet customers is in its third year of deployment. Built into the customer satisfaction data system is a review process. Each month an appointed analyst reviews collected survey data and produces a standardized report of aggregated results. reports are prepared and made available on the Dept. of WI Intranet, quarterly at WLT meetings, and monthly at Worknet ERC staff meetings. The Worknet Day Pass data system serves as a problematic diagnostic tool that provides WLT members and staff with valuable information needed to make decisions regarding customer service and program changes. Ultimately, the Day Pass Data Collection System provides a system-wide customer service and satisfaction approach based on actual performance indicator data.

Some improvements that have taken place based on follow-up of Day Pass customer ratings or directly from Day Pass customer comments are: 1) Increased specific job search topic related workshops, 2) Computer equipment and software updated, 3) Remodeled and increased seating capacity of the Worknet ERC reception area, 4) Day-Pass reproduced in Spanish, 5) Additional instructor hired for PLATO Lab to support the increased number of customers using the lab, 6) Office equipment (fax, copier) relocated for better customer access, 7) Improved customer orientation and service flow to extend greater flexibility to self-directed jobseeker basic services and to better meet the needs of individual jobseekers, and 8) Cross training of staff to increase customer access to personalized job coach assistance with specific job leads. In addition, hours of operation were extended to allow employed customers an opportunity to take advantage of Worknet services.

The Worknet system continuously looks for opportunities to enhance services. An example of this desire to better serve customers would be the recent addition of computer stations that provide assistance to customers with special needs. Wheelchair access, computer screens and software designed specifically to assist customers who are visually or hearing impaired are just a few of the services Worknet has available for our disabled customers. To further enhance the job search capabilities and access to information for customers with hearing impairments an AT&T Telecommunication Device (TTY) system is available.

As part of the strategic planning process, the WLT will formally evaluate the customer satisfaction survey system on an annual basis, and implement improvements in order to keep the system current with customer needs and direction. Monthly and quarterly aggregation, review, and analysis of the data itself will continue for organizational learning and improvement opportunities. The WLT has developed a Customer Comment Card and will be provided to customers as another means to comment on areas of need or concern.

3.d. Single point of contact for clients and employers

Evidence that all core services from all partners are available at the Worknet Employment Resource Center.

Partner relationships that satisfy all customers and increase positive referrals are built and maintained through the Worknet system. A MOU was signed by all partners in the system agreeing to provide Core A or Universal services at the Worknet ERC.

To support the “no wrong door, single point of contact” concept of the WIA, the WLT developed a service Matrix that identifies partner services, and specifically those provided at the Worknet ERC. The Matrix was used to develop a Worknet Resource Guide so customers and staff have information and access to Core “A” services. The guide also serves as a resource tool for staff.

For example, a customer desiring typing certification can accomplish this in the Computer Lab. However, if that same customer wants computer classes they can enroll into one of the Merced County Office of Education classes. If they are interested in upgrading their educational skills Merced Adult School has provided an instructor for assistance in the Plato Lab. Many people who visit the Worknet ERC are interested in entrepreneurial information, and both the Action Business Center and Workforce Development Department can provide assistance in those areas. The Housing Department representative is on site to assist customers with questions about qualifying for Section 8 housing and training opportunities held at its location. Anyone who has questions about unemployment benefits can speak with an Employment Development Department staff person.

To meet the Worknet goal for delivering quality business services, a Business Services Unit was formed and provides services to the Employer and Business Community of Merced County.

4. Information and Analysis

4.a. Information system supports continuous improvement

Existing systems adequately collect data.

Information, such as services being accessed, partner referrals, and customer comments is obtained and gathered at the Worknet ERC through Staff assisted services, and from data input to the Management Information System (MIS). Staff who work directly with customers capture information and document the information as appropriate for the level of service. The information is submitted to the responsible Systems Analyst who aggregates and analyzes the data using a customized database. Information is disseminated on a monthly basis to staff and the WLT. Comments, suggestions or complaints are addressed at different levels. The first level is when the Day Pass data is entered into the computer. Areas of concern are brought to the attention of the Worknet Program Manager, and items that can be responded to immediately are addressed. Other items may require additional time due to the nature of the customer comment; i.e., a complaint on services, staff, or a partner—any one of these would require a different response.

Core “A” Services: Can be “Staff Assisted” or “Self-Directed”. Both methods of service require minimal paperwork from the customers. As a result, minimal information is gathered regarding customers at this level. The Day Pass survey process collects information on Core Services used and customer satisfaction.

Intensive (Core “B”) and Training Services: All services and interactions/communications with customers receiving intensive and training services are documented in customer case files. Forms have been developed and standardized to track information collected at this level, including the IEP. Documentation remains in the case files for staff to review as needed and make decisions regarding customer services including providing career guidance and counseling.

As required in the WIA, Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) performance results are available in the Worknet ERC for customers and stakeholders to review. Customer Service and Satisfaction data is collected through the Worknet Day Pass System and results are available on Worknet ERC computers through the Worknet website. Annually, The Year In Review Toward a Better Workplace report on organizational performance is disseminated to the community in order to enhance relationship and accountability with the WIB and other key stakeholders, including potential customers as well as elected officials.

4.b. Continuous improvement linked to data collection

The collected data is linked to CQI efforts.

Measures and indicators for tracking and improving daily operations and overall organizational performance have been selected through the development of the Customer Service and Satisfaction Day Pass Data System and Case Management System. The intent is to use this data and the strategic goals to develop an action plan for the WLT. The purpose of the plan is to provide leaders with a blueprint for action and evaluation.

As information and data systems continue to be developed and deployed, all data and information availability mechanisms will be evaluated on an ongoing basis, and at the end of each year in May, as part of the WLT’s performance review and strategic planning and improvement process.

4.c. Resource Center offers: information in multiple mediums; self-service; Internet access, trained staff, etc. The above exists and is readily available to clients.

Job-seeking customers are able to gain access to information and obtain services via telephone, Internet, email and by visiting the Worknet ERC where they can receive staff assistance. Our affiliate Worknet ERC sites were established to provide convenient access to services for those customers living in the outlying areas of the county. Using the Internet allows customers to access information about Worknet services from any computer at anytime, which contributes to customer convenience.

Employers can seek services in the same manner and also receive information directly at their place of business from our Worknet Business Service Representatives. All customer key access mechanisms used are designed to provide customers with convenient and current technological methods to access information and services. Through the Worknet website, jobseekers and Employers can access information and resources 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In addition, a jobseeker can apply for employment, or an employer can place a job order. If a customer requires services that are not provided at the Worknet ERC, but are part of the Worknet system, there are two processes in place to provide customer assistance: 1) The Cross Referral Form, and 2) A telephone call to the referring agency to obtain any additional information for the customer. The referral form would be completed with the address, contact name, phone number and any additional information

the customer may need. In addition, there is a “Fact Sheet” at the front counter of the Worknet ERC to assist all partners when making a referral to a partner in the Worknet system.

A Merced County Resource Guide is available to partners, staff and customers on-line, or a hard copy is available to provide additional assistance in making a referral.

Worknet is a major source of information to the community regarding Local Labor Market Information, Unemployment Insurance, unemployment rates, wage data, downsizing, and other economic development information. This information is available to organizations, businesses, customers and individuals at the Worknet ERC upon request, or through the Internet, EDD, and ERISS Works Internet Application Services. Information access regarding supplier performance, specifically occupational skills trainers on the ETPL, is available at the Worknet ERC for staff, management, customers, suppliers and other stakeholders.

4.d. Strategy for meeting state and local MIS needs (management reporting)

Audit results indicate compliance.

The WIB designated the Dept. of WI as the One-Stop Operator. Therefore, it is responsible for administering WIA funds and other related funding sources for the Worknet ERC. The Dept. of WI Fiscal/MIS Division is responsible for planning, developing, and implementing a sound Fiscal and Management Information System, and ensures required reports by regulators—such as the State reports regarding performance standards and budget status—are submitted on a quarterly and annual basis as required. Fiscal/MIS provides monthly performance and fiscal data reports to Dept. of WI leaders who provide applicable data and information to the WIB and WLT.

As the One-Stop Operator, the Dept. of WI is highly regulated by local, state, and federal agencies to ensure accountability for tax dollars used. The Dept. of WI is monitored yearly for compliance in fiscal and procurement performance. Fiscal and procurement performance monitoring is conducted by the Dept of Workforce Investment Division, State of California, and the Employment Development Department. The most recent performance findings indicate that the Department, including the Worknet ERC, is meeting performance standards and expenditure requirements. The Dept. of WI monitors the partner’s MOUs with the WIB on a yearly basis to ensure compliance.

5. Human Resource Focus 150

5.a. Staff is competent

Job descriptions exist for all positions. Employees are evaluated against the requirements of the job descriptions. Employee evaluations demonstrate that employees are competent and meeting job requirements.

All partner agencies have certified that staff assigned to the Worknet ERC are competent and meet job requirements as listed on existing job descriptions. Each partner has its own contractually driven employee evaluations that are completed on a regular basis. Deficiencies or opportunities for professional growth are addressed through training, coaching and/or mentoring. Strengths and accomplishment are noted. In addition, The WLT has identified the 12 Workforce Development

competencies and staff will endeavor to achieve them and receive certification modeled from the NAWDP.

5.b. Continuous learning

Employees have an individual development plan that has been implemented. There is an organization-wide employee development plan that has been implemented. There is a vehicle for making employees aware of available training.

Each staff member assigned to the Worknet ERC will be provided an individual Employee Development Plan (EDP). The WLT has identified and adopted twelve (12) Workforce Development Competency Areas that will be the focus of the organization-wide EDP. Partners will notify their staff of various training dates, locations, topics and available methods to receive training. The 12 competencies adopted by the WLT are as follows:

- History and Structure of the Workforce Development System
- Career Development Process
- Labor Market Information
- Diversity
- Customer Service
- Program Management
- Interpersonal Relations
- Technology
- General “Helping” Skills
- Job Search Skills
- Job Keeping Skills
- Job Preparation Skills

The 12 competencies are the foundation of the Certified Workforce Development Professional program created by the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (NAWDP). The WLT has established a committee to develop the scope and sequence of trainings, which will be made available to staff to meet the 12 competencies. The workshops will be developed and presented by representatives of the partner agencies who have particular expertise in the subject competency. It is expected that a minimum of four modules will be offered each calendar year. The WLT anticipates that the EDP will be finalized and implemented by fall 2003.

Once the EDP is finalized, supervisors will work with individual staff to establish Individual Training Plans (ITPs). ITPs will be based on the 12 competencies of the EDP. Objectives of the IDP will be determined by the degree to which the individual staff member has demonstrated mastery of each competency. Objectives will be prioritized according to the relevance of each competency to the staff member’s role within the Worknet system. Once the objectives of the ITP are determined, the supervisor will be responsible for ensuring that the staff member is informed of the training schedule, attends the identified modules, and completes the coursework associated with each module. The supervisor and the staff member will review the ITP at least once a year, and more often if necessary. The EDP training schedule will be published and distributed to all Worknet partners and assigned staff.

5.c. Team orientation

There are regular meetings to disseminate information and discuss important business issues. There are multidisciplinary cross-functional teams to work on performance improvement initiatives.

The WLT meets regularly and has been convening for the last one and a half years. Although meetings of Worknet ERC staff have taken place and partners were encouraged to attend, there will be regular meetings of Worknet partners and staff to be held biweekly. Staff will be informed of the meeting schedule and agenda items via email. Meeting notes will be distributed to all staff.

The Dept. of WI as the One-Stop Operator has established several cross-functional teams to address performance improvement initiatives. Those teams that specifically address Worknet ERC performance are as follows:

Customer Satisfaction: This team analyzes customer satisfaction data to ensure that a customer focus is used in improving services and programs.

Customer Service: This team is responsible for developing and refining procedures to introduce customers to the Worknet system, to seamlessly refer customers to partner agencies, and to design quality uniform bilingual telephone procedures.

Business Services: This team works to identify and develop services that meet the needs of the business customer of the Workforce Development system.

Marketing: The goals of this team are to promote and market the Worknet system to better meet customer needs, increase partner involvement, improve the professional image of the Worknet system at outreach functions, and increase participation in outreach efforts.

Safety: The safety team fosters and supports a safe environment for staff, partners, and customers of the Worknet system.

Worknet partners and staff are invited and encouraged to participate in any of the above listed teams. Teams meet at the discretion of the facilitator and team members. Participation in cross-functional teams that relate to the 12 Workforce Development Competency Areas can be included as objectives of the ITP. This will provide staff with hands-on application for those competencies.

5.d. Uniform application of human resources policies

Results of employee satisfaction surveys demonstrate uniform application of policies. A formal grievance process exists. Grievances are not excessive given the size of the organization.

The WLT has developed an employee satisfaction survey for Worknet partners and staff which will formally be administered in August and used for the Quality Review Work Session in October. Surveys will be continuously available informally to all Worknet staff and partners. Completed surveys may be placed in the suggestion box located in the employee break room area in the comprehensive site. Worknet partners and staff will be provided a formal survey semiannually. Completed surveys will be available to the WLT for review.

Formal grievance processes exist for each of the partner agencies. There is a designated contact person within each partner agency for grievance issues. Copies of each partner agency's grievance policy may be obtained by contacting the Human Resource representative for each agency.

According to the records maintained by each of the partner agencies, and given the size of the Worknet ERC, there is no indication of excessive grievances.

5.e. Employee expectations well defined

Policies and procedures are disseminated throughout the organization. All new employees get an orientation to the organization.

Policies and Procedures for Worknet ERC partners and staff have been developed and are reviewed with each staff member as part of the staff orientation process.

All new staff is provided an orientation to the Worknet ERC and Worknet system. The 12 Workforce Development Competency Areas are introduced during the orientation. When appropriate, specific competencies, such as the History and Structure of the Workforce Development System, are addressed during the orientation process.

6. Process Management

6.a. Uniform application of policies and procedures. Policies and procedures are disseminated throughout the organization. All new employees get an orientation to the organization.

The Worknet ERC has policies and procedures in place that specifically address Worknet processes developed for daily operations of the center and for programs and services for customers and staff. Policies and procedures are reviewed by each new employee assigned to the Worknet ERC. Policy and procedure revision updates are provided to staff at staff meetings and in writing using email, memos and the Intranet, and also through an annual review requirement.

The Worknet New Employee Orientation (NEO) process consists of a staff tour of the facility by a manager. New Worknet ERC staff will receive an orientation of Policies and Procedures, and the Worknet Cross Training/Cross Informing Plan. Partners receive copies of the Operational Procedures, Orientation of Policies and Procedures, and a schedule of Competency Training dates with location and times. In addition, The Worknet ERC manager will ensure that a welcome letter is mailed or given directly to the newly assigned employee.

A Worknet ERC supervisor will schedule the new employee to attend a four-hour Worknet Overview Orientation. The supervisor will notify the WLT, Worknet ERC manager and supervisors, and orientation topic presenters of scheduled presentation date as needed.

A Worknet ERC supervisor will assist the new employees with completing all other items on the NEO checklist and ERC Policies and Procedures Checklist within the first month of assignment at the Worknet ERC. Completed NEO and ERC Policies and Procedures Checklist, where appropriate, will be placed in the employee's Personnel File, or in a partner information folder.

6.b. Feedback mechanism

An adequate feedback mechanism exists.

The feedback report from this application and subsequent assessment by the Quality Assurance Team will provide excellent opportunities for CQI. Work groups will be formed, to include line staff, to address any issues. Worknet ERC staff and partners are encouraged to bring forth any issues to be addressed by the WLT. The team looks at the following factors to determine priority and whether a work group should be formed:

- Impact to customer products, services and satisfaction
- Impact to front line staff including training, instruments and other preparation needed for implementation
- Costs associated with improvements
- Impact to organizational performance
- Alignment with vision, mission and values

6.c. Service recovery

There is a formal policy/mechanism for complaint management. Examination of a sample of complaints indicates that the policy is being implemented.

Worknet ERC has a formal written customer grievance/complaint policy that is disseminated to all first time visitors when they complete and turn in the Customer Information Survey, or attend Worknet ERC Orientation sessions. It is also available in the computer lab and on the Worknet website. The policy is reviewed by all new staff assigned to the Worknet ERC during New Employee Orientation, and is revisited at least annually by all staff through awareness training conducted by the agency. Also, the policy and complaint forms are posted on the Dept. of WI Intranet for staff access.

Every effort is made to resolve all grievances or complaints in an informal manner. The staff person who receives the initial complaint should try and resolve the issue. If it cannot be resolved, then staff documents the efforts made and notifies a Worknet ERC supervisor who meets with the complainant to explore all options for resolution (supervisor documents the full meeting, in writing). If the supervisor cannot resolve the issue, the Worknet ERC manager meets with the complainant and if the issue still cannot be settled, the manager must notify the Equal Opportunity (EO) Officer and document all efforts in writing. In all cases, the complainant is notified of their right to file a formal grievance. If the complainant wishes to file a formal grievance, all written documentation of the grievance is forwarded to the EO Officer.

Formal complaints are filed with The Dept. of WI (One-Stop Operator) EO Officer or directly with the Director of Civil Rights (DCR), Department of Labor. Complainants alleging discrimination are informed that they have 180 days from the alleged violation to file a complaint. Any entity or individual who wishes to file a formal complaint or a formal grievance arising in connection with Worknet programs or services provided by the Worknet ERC, may do so in writing.

In order to be considered for review, the formal complaint must be filed in writing and must include reasons for the allegation in sufficient detail to allow the DCR or Dept. of WI to determine whether: 1) Dept. of WI or DCR has jurisdiction; 2) The complaint is filed in a timely manner; and 3) The

complaint has merit. A statement of the relief sought, and the complainant's signature are also required. Within ten working days after receiving notification of a formal complaint, the Dept. of WI contacts the complainant to schedule an interview. The Dept. of WI renders a decision within 60 days of the filing of the complaint. If the complainant does not receive a decision within the 60-day time frame, or is not satisfied with the decision rendered by the Dept. of WI, the complainant is notified of the right to request a review of the complaint by the DCR. If the complainant chooses to file a written complaint with the DCR, it must be within 30 days of the receipt of the notification from the Dept. of WI.

Complaints may be directed or mailed to: Director, Civil Rights, DOL in Washington, DC or the EEO Office of Workforce Investment (OWI) in Sacramento. Copies are mailed to the Chief EEO Officer for EDD and the Local Policy Guidance Manager of the OWI in Sacramento.

The Dept. of WI EO Officer documents allegations or complaints from participants against service providers or vendors alleging noncompliance of applicable nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions. Facts will be used to determine if recourse is available by the participant, or to determine if the Worknet ERC should continue to utilize the service(s) of the service provider or vendor. Failure to comply with nondiscrimination and EEO provisions by service providers or vendors may result in nonreferral of WIA participants for training or services until compliance is reached.

The majority of complaints are resolved through informal methods and do not reach the level of formal complaints. The EO Officer provides a report to Executive Leadership when one is filed, including the reasons why it was filed.

An annual report summarizing the number of formal complaints filed (although minimal) is provided to Executive Leadership. Policy and procedural changes are immediately implemented as needed in order to eliminate causes of complaints.

Complaint information gathered through formal and informal methods is communicated to supervisors and program managers as well as staff. Information such as the number and types of complaints, as well as strategies for resolution, is discussed for purposes of eliminating causes of complaints, organizational learning, and process/product improvement. In-service or formal training is coordinated as needed in order to ensure that staff and leaders continuously improve their skills to immediately and effectively resolve complaints.

Grievances or complaints concerning Worknet partner agencies are directed to the respective partner staff for processing in accordance with that partner's grievance procedures. The appropriate Worknet partner EO Officer will assist the customer throughout the formal complaint management process to ensure a satisfactory resolution.

Jobseeking and business services customers may register complaints via telephone, email or in person at the Worknet ERC. Business services customers may also register complaints directly with our Business Services representative, Job Coaches, or with the EO Officer. All customers are provided with information regarding the various access points during the first contact with Worknet. This immediate introduction to the access points is needed so that customers can take full advantage of our services at their convenience.

6.d. Staff empowerment

Decisions can be made at various levels within the organization. There is an organizational assessment to determine if the degree of empowerment is appropriate/working?

Empowerment and innovation: With the deployment of performance excellence strategies, the WLT and several Worknet staff attended training in areas such as the Baldrige Criteria, Coaching, Team Facilitation, and Quality Teams and Tools. These sessions provided tools, techniques, and guiding principles to assist Worknet leaders in creating an environment that promotes empowerment and innovation. One strategy was to decentralize daily decision making to the front line/process owners through the implementation of Continuous Improvement teams and workgroups.

The cross functionality configuration of the teams allows for Worknet staff to work together, sometimes for the first time, allowing an environment for creativity and innovation by bringing together the multitude of program and service expertise.

The strategies the WLT has undertaken to promote innovation and empowerment are the foundation for ensuring organizational agility. In order for staff to have the capacity to respond immediately to change, they must be empowered to act without fear of risk taking. As such, the WLT continues to work towards increasing empowerment and fostering an environment for innovation. The primary strategy to accomplish this environment is through the implementation and evaluation of performance excellence strategies.

7. Business Results

7.a. Customer and community awareness

There is an awareness of One-Stop based on random survey of community.

There is a growing and continuing awareness of the Worknet system as evidenced by several different surveys either completed, in progress or ongoing within the past three years. Those surveys are as follows with a brief synopsis of each:

The Action Business Center (ABC) conducted a Retention Expansion Survey wherein staff was funded to conduct the survey in person with local businesses. The survey had 35 questions, and 106 businesses were surveyed with two specific questions that had the Dept. of WI (previously PITD) as an answer option. The responses were generally low as it relates to using the services, approximately 3.7%; however, this survey was conducted and completed in 2000 when the Worknet ERC was in its infancy stage.

A second phase of this survey is currently in progress. The goal of this phase is to survey 125 local businesses, and thus far 116 have been surveyed. The questions remain the same but the answer options have been changed to reflect Worknet. While the survey is still in progress and final results have not yet been aggregated, it has been determined that awareness and inquiries for information relating to services provided by Worknet have significantly increased with 42 of the 116 businesses surveyed either aware of or inquiring about the services and/or programs.

The ERISS Corporation survey had four specific supplemental questions relating to the Worknet services, and of the 527 responses at least 30% would use our services at least quarterly, and

overwhelmingly used training for existing employees and customized training program services through Worknet.

An electronic marketing survey of the Dept. of WI employees was conducted in October 2002 to determine awareness of the marketing on behalf of Worknet. There were 12 questions, all relating to Worknet marketing, with 70 responses. Approximately 90% of the Dept. of WI staff was aware of marketing being done for Worknet and the types of marketing. Presentations of the results of the survey were done for each unit within the Dept. of WI to continue the effort to heighten awareness among staff.

An electronic marketing survey was conducted in February 2003 of the WIB and the Worknet Leadership Team to determine marketing awareness. There were 10 questions, all relating to Worknet marketing, with 35 responses. Awareness was much higher from the Worknet Leadership Team than from the WIB. The results were presented to both groups.

The Center for Workforce Preparation Development Employer survey developed by the United States Chambers of Commerce began in January 2003 and is still in progress. There are 14 questions with 9 specific questions about the One-Stop. The results will provide an awareness level of the Worknet system, and will be used to assist with the Workforce Academies in June 2003.

The Worknet Day Pass is completed daily by all customers. It solicits information to determine how customers learned of Worknet services. The results are used to determine the most effective marketing methods, and identify potential gaps in marketing efforts.

There is an organizational effort to raise awareness.

There is an ongoing and continuing effort to raise awareness about the Worknet system and the ERC. This is being accomplished in a myriad of ways including:

Worknet ERC signage is now in place in Merced and Los Banos. Currently, a sign cannot be placed at the Livingston site due to contractual issues with the Human Services Agency. Worknet partner signage has been provided to all partners for placement in windows at their home agencies.

The WLT is in a continuing mode to raise awareness about Worknet. Until recently Worknet ERC staffed a table twice a week at the Merced Mall. Worknet ERC staff and partners are participating in the Chamber of Commerce Workforce Academies and Roundtables. Attendance and participation in community job fairs, community events and presentations to service organizations are also part of this effort. The Worknet ERC facilitated the Earned Income Tax Credit Program with community volunteers and staff. Members of the WLT have conducted radio interviews to promote Worknet. An Open House for the community was held at the Worknet ERC in September 2002.

Partners such as Merced Adult School and Employment Development Department have weekly orientations wherein Worknet brochures and information are distributed. Merced County Office of Education conducts field trips for youth to the Worknet ERC. Staff hand delivered flyers to businesses to promote the extended hours of the Worknet ERC.

Literature and brochures relating to tax credits and other benefits to Employers have been hand delivered, and Worknet information has also been provided. This literature will be made available to

all partner agencies for their home agencies, as finances allow. Worknet ERC name badges for staff and partners are in place.

The Youth Employability Card program in collaboration with the WIB, Merced County Office of Education, and Merced County Schools also raised an organizational awareness. The Career Centers at all Merced County High Schools have information on the program and on Worknet.

Resources are devoted to marketing/PR.

A variety of mediums are in place to market Worknet of Merced County Employment Resource Centers and they are consistent and frequent, in that one or more of the mediums are used on a weekly basis. They are as follows:

Billboards, radio, newspapers, television, internet, direct mailings, mailings through inserts, printed materials such as brochures, marketing and website, PowerPoint presentations, community presentations and involvement, annual year-end reports and promotional items.

Marketing/PR addresses both supply and demand.

Customized marketing is done for all potential customers identified as jobseekers, employers, and youth. Partnering agencies are identified that offer specific programs and services at Worknet ERC for each category of customer.

Jobseekers: Services for jobseekers, which are adult and dislocated workers, are highlighted in all marketing mediums previously mentioned in this section, conducted on behalf of Worknet.

Employers: The newly formed Business Services Unit through the Dept. of WI has customized services for Employers. A marketing plan specific to this unit will be developed and implemented.

Youth: There are specific partners who provide services to older and younger youth who conduct additional marketing on their own behalf. The Youth Council and their subcommittees through the WIB have developed a Marketing Plan specific to youth. They have also published a Youth Resource Directory, and are currently working on a Youth website. The Youth Employability Card program has also been developed and was implemented in the county in October 2002.

Marketing plan exists and results are evaluated against the plan.

A Marketing Plan was developed through the Marketing Committee of the WIB in collaboration with Dept. of WI staff who is tasked with implementing and complying with the plan. Currently, due to recent revisions of the committees, staff report on a regular basis to the Planning and Program Development Committee.

The Marketing Plan does not currently mandate evaluation of results. However, staff review reports of the Day Pass data that is collected at the Worknet ERC from customers who are asked how they learned of Worknet. The WLT attempts to address any apparent variances or needs as it relates to marketing.

7.b. Demonstrated and Measurable

Financial Performance: A budget exists and performance suggests that the organization is operating within budget and significant variances have been adequately explained.

A budget for the Worknet ERC exists and performance does, in fact, suggest that it is operating within that budget. There are no significant variances that need to be explained. The Dept. of WI undergoes state audits and monitoring, and is also required to produce a Fiscal Procurement Report to validate appropriate operations and variances.

Costs are benchmarked (and compare favorably) against other workforce investment areas.

Costs are not currently being benchmarked, however, there has been ongoing dialogue with Kern and Stanislaus Counties to implement a benchmark system in order to compare services, performance and cost.

Operational performance. Objectives in the strategic plan are achieved.

The WLT has not developed a strategic plan specific to Worknet ERC. The WIB has a five-year strategic plan that includes Worknet. The WLT has developed five strategic goals and has established dates for achievement of each goal, and will be implementing a specific action plan in the near future for each goal. It has also established its mission, vision and values for Worknet.

Customer satisfaction.

The Worknet Day Pass is used as a survey to solicit customer satisfaction for each initial visit. This information is collected and then entered into a web-based data system wherein reports are made available for review of the level of customer satisfaction being experienced. The WLT is currently reviewing this data quarterly. The Worknet ERC is consistently receiving ratings of 9 or higher, very satisfied, in all areas.