

**Analysis of Intergovernmental Operations and Programs
Workforce Development and Participation
A View from Evanston, Illinois
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The National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) Standing Panel on Intergovernmental Systems has provided a series of suggestions on policy areas that the proposed Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (“the Commission”) should study. The policy areas included the following: infrastructure renewal and maintenance, emergency management, opioid addiction, and workforce development and participation. The Standing Panel has developed a criteria of seven different structural and procedural dimensions to review these policy areas:

- Structuring the process for communicating about problems, strategies, policies, and results;
- Agreeing on priorities: high consequence problems requiring intergovernmental action;
- Solving problems with agility and accountability at the level closest to the problem;
- Breaking down and pursuing opportunities across silos;
- Using data, analytics, and measured trials to inform decision and actions
- Sharing knowledge with decision-makers, front-line workers, participants in the delivery and supply chains, and affected parties; and
- Focusing on outcome improvements with minimal undesirable side effects.

The focus of this document is ***workforce development and participation*** and the review of the aforementioned structural and procedural dimensions of this policy area from the vantage point of local government practitioners in Evanston, Illinois. Evanston is a community of 75,000 residents located immediately north of Chicago.

This paper first applies the Standing Panel criteria to the issue of workforce development and participation. One additional parameter is added for discussion which includes how issues of equity and diversity can also be applied.

Structuring the process for communicating about problems, strategies, policies, and results:

The process and effort to communicate about the workforce development and participation and policy area is multi-faceted. First, workforce development and participation is constantly changing due to economic shifts and not all economies throughout communities are the same. Second is the challenge of who participates in the communication channels and discussion of working on these issues. Third is the opportunity to build on the 2014 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

WIOA was designed to facilitate intergovernmental communication and establish a shared approach to workforce issues.

The initial challenge with addressing workforce development and participation is defining what exactly this is and how results are quantified or determined. In the title of the policy area “participation” signals that simply the act of “participating” is something. What does participation mean? Is it searching for a job? Is it training for a job? Is it retaining a job? Establishing a clear definition of workforce development and participation would help guide the discussion and how success and accomplishments are measured. Additionally, acknowledging that for different communities and different groups of people, this means something different.

Individuals that work with groups that are part of the focus of those in workforce development programs range broadly. A June 2017 report from the Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings highlighted several categories of individuals that are part of the “out-of-work” population in the United States. The seven categories ranged from young and less educated individuals to older highly educated individuals. These categories of people engage in the workforce in very different ways and are likely physically located in different spaces and utilize different services.¹ The report notes that localizing services is key to ensuring that different groups of people are served, “The major out-of-work groups we identified tend to locate in different kinds of places, which further suggests the importance of locally specific strategies to connect people to employment” (Page 20).

WIOA was signed into law in July 2014. In the center of WIOA is the goal to bring together employers, workers, and entities that build skills. It also establishes states as the leaders in determining what employment activities and workforce development takes place in each state and within each region. States in turn distribute funds to local workforce investment boards (WIBs) and agencies that support information about job openings, offer career counseling, job trainings, and other support. Highlights of the program include:

- States align workforce development programs. Each state develops a four-year strategy program. Inclusion of other key partners such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Perkins career and technical education programs.
- Requires investments in employment and training be evidence-based and data-driven. Programs have to report on common performance indicators (workers entered, wages, credentials, etc.). Evaluation by third parties every four years.
- Increase access to high-quality training and connect employers and employees to that training.²

Agreeing on priorities: high consequence problems requiring intergovernmental action;

¹ (Ross and Holmes 2017)

² <https://www.doleta.gov/wioa/Overview.cfm> (United States Department of Labor n.d.)

As discussed above, a significant challenge associated with the communication regarding workforce development is who is participating in the discussion and who engages on this work. Identifying how each entity within the supply chain of workforce development support contributes to the success of individuals and providing those wraparound services. The cooperation between schools and local government is critical in preparing each generation of workers. How secondary schools and community colleges engage with workforce investment boards and other providers determines how well served individuals are. Additionally, in any jurisdiction there could be multiple educational institutions and governments that each have their own goals for workforce readiness/preparedness. Working together to build a shared vision for workforce development and participation will support successful outcomes.

The Illinois Board of Community Colleges noted coordination with K-12 institutions in their 2017 Workforce Education Strategic Plan to, “Increase Early Career-Related Education and Exposure.”³ Under this strategic direction, the following goals are identified:

- “Build partnerships among K-12, Adult Education, CTE, and other partners to facilitate earlier engagement in career exploration and work-based learning opportunities for all student population.”
- “Influence policy shifts to allow more time for students in K-12 to have more hands-on training, internship, and co-op education.”
- “Expose K-12, Adult Education, and CTE students and other populations, such as young people with High School Equivalency Certificates (HSEs) who are stuck in low-wage, low-skill jobs, to in-demand career opportunities in employer-defined career pathways, and facilitate earlier “on-ramps” to pathways for these students.”

In addition to examining intergovernmental actions and cooperation, internal organizational examination helps determine best courses of action and if any corrections need to be made. Recognizing the nature of human services and organizational silos in local government, the City of Evanston is currently engaged in a review of all departments that offer any aspect of human services. Currently the City provides work and funding associated with the following areas: general assistance, emergency assistance, youth and young adults’ employment, senior services, victim advocates, workforce development, and mental health board. The City is engaged in a results-based accountability (RBA) tool that will move the City beyond discussing and identifying problems to utilizing data to take action to solve problems. It takes into account the result that is trying to be met and works in reverse to understand the “means” that is used to get to that outcome.⁴

Solving problems with agility and accountability at the level closest to the problem

There is recognition that there is a need to agile and accountable in the workforce development and participation policy area. The WOIA sought to address this

³ (Illinois Community College Board n.d.)

⁴ (Clear Impact n.d.)

accountability and agility by bringing together multiple Federal agencies following the Great Recession in order to identify opportunities to work. A next step that future iterations of a WOIA or other legislation could better identify or determine which level or unit of government (local, state, federal, school, etc.) is best suited for what role in workforce development and participation.

It is often local communities and municipalities in predominantly urban areas that have the greatest understanding and experience dealing with individual cases and increasing opportunities and are those closest to neighbor-based solutions to problems.

In 2010, the City of Evanston received a \$18.5 million grant from the Federal Government through the Neighborhood Stabilization Program 2 (NSP2) to acquire and rehabilitate 100 units of foreclosed or vacant housing in two census tracts that were hardest hit by the foreclosure crisis. The City, in its application, had determined that the need to stabilize Evanston's housing was a path to recovery following the Great Recession.

The City and Brinshore Development, its master developer, employed two primary strategies to achieve the stabilization goal of this program. The first was the acquisition strategy and focusing on "worst case" properties that would be least likely to be purchased and rehabbed by a family seeking to purchase and live in the home. The second strategy was to utilize the program to employ residents in the affected neighborhoods.

The results of this project were multi-dimensional. While, the acquisition strategy resulted in much higher per-unit rehab costs due to the deteriorated condition, particularly of single family homes, that were acquired. However, by cleaning up the most blighted properties, it helped maintain property values for many long-time homeowners, reduced crime, and stabilized these neighborhoods. The employment of residents, at a time when construction jobs had nearly evaporated, meant additional stabilization of a portion of Evanston's workforce. From 2010 to 2013, \$4.26M of a total of \$6M in construction subcontracts were awarded to minority-owned, woman-owned, and Evanston-based small residential contractors; 25% of those contracts qualified as HUD Section 3 by providing jobs to low/moderate income workers. In addition to construction contracts, local realtors were employed as the sales team for rehabbed homes, and residents were hired to provide security at job sites, as well as for property maintenance work including snow removal and yard maintenance.

Evanston's ability to design and implement this project, meant Evanston was able to define the problem and its solution. The resulting employment opportunities, stabilization of Evanston's west and south sides, meant a stabilization of other institutions such as schools and the local government.

Many studying low-income workers have learned that there are many difficulties associated with being poor that forces those in low-income situations into more deeply challenging circumstances. Creating a user-centered approach to examining what the

worker needs is a critical way to resolve the barriers that exist to building and maintaining stable employment. While the focus is often on building skills and identifying working opportunities for individuals, if the stable resources for workers and their families are not established, then the cycle of poverty will perpetuate no matter how well someone is employed.

Breaking down and pursuing opportunities across silos

Within the workforce development and participation policy area, silos exist “vertically” between different units of government and non-governmental parties engaged in workforce development and also “horizontally” between those that provide supportive services like housing, transportation policy, and child care. A possible tool for addressing the vertical silos is to create a sector-based approach to looking at industries and workforce development; King County, Washington has done extensive work on this in order to identify future opportunities in workforce. Additionally, within the sector work, coordination of support services for workers should be included. Notably, child care, housing, and transportation are significant household costs for workers. Working to address each of those issues as they relate to the industrial sectors will help provide more support for workers.

The work to support workforce development and participation in King County, Washington is a good example of local coordination through a larger County organization. King County is comprised of over 80 different communities (cities, towns, census-designated places, and unincorporated areas). Every two years, the Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County (WDC), reviews industry sectors in King County to determine how to focus workforce development efforts and how to frame strategies. The Seattle-King WDC, like other WDCs is the agency under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 that serves individuals in the County on workforce development and participation matters.

Criteria to select sectors are based on the following stated criteria: economic size and scope, job demand, supply and demand alignment, and potential for impact.⁵ Currently Seattle-King County (WDC) is focused on the following sectors: healthcare, manufacturing, including aerospace and maritime, construction including energy efficiency, professional/scientific and technical services, and information technology including interactive media. Seattle-King County WDC cites a holistic approach to addressing the various sectors. The example highlighted in their most recent annual report notes that the holistic model builds relationships with partners, provides business support by industry, and target specific strategies for occupation, education and training pathways with grants and funding.⁶

In addition to studying the skills and training needed for each silo, studying the barriers that exist for those working in sectors as they related to childcare, transportation, and housing are also important. If any one of those single elements of a person’s life is inconsistent or is disrupted, one or more of the aforementioned elements may be

⁵ (Seattle-King WDC n.d.)

⁶ (Seattle-King County WDC Annual Report 2017)

impacted. Barbara Ehrenreich notes this in her first-hand account of working jobs typically available to low-income and low-skill women, “I was also dismayed to find that in some ways, it is actually more expensive to be poor than not poor. If you can’t afford the first month’s rent and security deposit you need in order to rent an apartment, you may get stuck in an overpriced residential motel. If you don’t have a kitchen or even a refrigerator and microwave, you will find yourself falling back on convenience store food, which—in addition to its nutritional deficits—is also alarmingly overpriced. If you need a loan, as most poor people eventually do, you will end up paying an interest rate many times more than what a more affluent borrower would be charged. To be poor—especially with children to support and care for—is a perpetual high-wire act.”

The complexity of linking workforce development and participation with childcare is multi-faceted. Connecting families with affordable childcare means more money is available to pay for other household costs; additionally affordable day care means that families with two adults may be more inclined to participate in the workforce if they know they have secure and affordable child care. A recent *New York Times* editorial highlighted, how this impacts all families who require child care, “Parents who pay for formal day care or full-time nanny have less money for other important things, to say nothing of fun, and that means more stress and anxiety. Parents on tight budgets may be forced to seek informal, cheaper care.”⁷ The editorial highlights the Economic Policy Institute’s research on the cost of childcare on a state-by-state basis. In the case of Illinois, the average cost of infant care in Illinois is \$12,963 or \$1,080 per month; this puts Illinois as the 8th most expensive state for infant care. EPI’s research supports reform measures that would cap family childcare expenses at 10% of their income. In the example of Illinois, the research suggests that this could expand Illinois’ economy by 1.6% or create \$11.4 billion of new economic activity.⁸

The Urban Institute highlighted the importance of linking childcare and employment. In surveying workers, it was identified that many workers based their job satisfaction on whether they had a positive outlook on their child’s child care options. Notable conclusions of the report were:

- Utilization of a variety of partners to support workers and their child-care needs;
- Flexibility in utilization of WIOA funds to provide financial support for child care for clients;
 - Families often need help paying for child care. Some families are eligible for TANF or CCDBG funds, in some cases when families did not qualify for these funds, the local WIOA had funding available to assist (however these funds were considered temporary or to “fill a gap”)⁹.
- Education for the employer of benefits of child care support for employees.

The work associated with, “[H]elping employers understand how childcare contributes to employee attendance and productivity.” A sector-based approach could be used to

⁷ (Pollitt 2019)

⁸ (Economic Policy Institute 2018)

⁹ (Adams and Gebrekristos 2018)

working with employers on child care issues; the child care needs (the hours worked and locations) of a health care worker are likely different than someone working in manufacturing or construction.

The link between workforce development and participation and transportation has long been studied and linked. Agencies and organizations involved with transportation regularly link the two and recognize the importance of addressing. Car-dependent communities are filled with workers that may not be able to access a personal vehicle to travel; as a result they are often reliant on complicated transportation solutions (walking long distances, multiple bus rides, etc.). In the instance where one of those “legs” of the trip fails or is not on time, workers are often stranded or forced to spend more money to utilize cabs or other more expensive forms of transportation. Complicating all of the to-work transportation is often additional trips for child care or other related trips. Employer supported-transportation (shuttles, compensation for transportation, etc.) could be one potential way to address these challenges. Additionally, working with transportation agencies on patterns of service and demand may be an additional way to support workers and their transportation needs.

Using data, analytics and measured trials to inform decisions and actions

Workforce data is amassed through many channels that range from governments and schools to not-for-profits and employers. How data is collected and shared and subsequently used to make decisions is key in tailoring establishing functioning workforce development programs.

The National Skills Coalition’s Workforce Data Quality Campaign is a group that “advocates for inclusive, aligned and market-relevant data systems used for advancing the nation’s skilled workforce and helping U.S. industries compete in a changing economy.”¹⁰ The WDQC advocates for stronger connections between states, K-12 institutions, workforce development partners and stakeholders on data gathering and sharing. Examples cited in case studies of two states that have been successful in sharing longitudinal data (Kentucky and Virginia) the following was found:

- “Communicate tailored information about benefits: In order to build support with participating agencies, state longitudinal data system staff can share tailored messages about how stakeholders can benefit from participating in the state longitudinal data system....
- Clearly explain privacy and security practices: Many state agencies are concerned about privacy and security and the need to protect the data for which they are responsible...By proactively providing detailed information about privacy and security practices, state longitudinal data system leaders can ease these concerns.
- Ensure participation in data governance: State longitudinal data system leaders can ensure continued support for the system by enabling the leaders of

¹⁰ (National Skills Coalition n.d.)

participating agencies to have a sense of ownership over the longitudinal data system. States may do this by creating a governance or advisory council with a representative from each participating agency....”¹¹

The U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) recently merged STAR Communities’ Rating System into its programs of certifications. Prior to the merge, STAR Communities reviewed different aspects of community livability; a goal area that aligned well with workforce development activities was “Economy & Jobs”. This goal area established several “outcomes” and “actions” on this goal area that allowed communities to measure their success on workforce development related activities to determine where there were opportunities to grow. Examples of outcomes that were included in the STAR rating system that related to workforce development included:

- Demonstration of progress towards 60% post-secondary attainment by 2025 including high-quality credentials and associate, bachelor, and graduate/professional degrees;
- Demonstrate an increasing percentage of individuals within each racial, ethnic and gender subgroup have obtained a high-quality post-secondary educational degree or credential over time; and
- Demonstrate the percentage of employed are proportional to the population in the labor force for each racial/ethnic group.

In further studies and efforts, NAPA would be well-positioned to develop a standard for how to utilize and digest data as well as establishing standards for outcomes by which to measure information and progress on the success of workforce development programs and participation.

Sharing knowledge with decision-makers, front-line workers, participants in the delivery and supply chains, and affected parties

As previously noted, community colleges can provide the link between workers seeking to participate in workforce development and participation activities and the employers that seek to employ them or obtain additional training for their workers. Community Colleges can build on career pathway work that was previously developed to support students. Community colleges can also establish relationships with employers to understand how curriculum needs to be developed to support these career pathways. A 2016 Brookings report, “Preparing America’s labor force: Workforce development programs in public community colleges”, listed the following as successful ways community colleges support workforce development:

1. Successful workforce training programs at public community colleges include industry or employer engagement in curricular development.

¹¹“ (Workforce Data Quality Campaign n.d.)

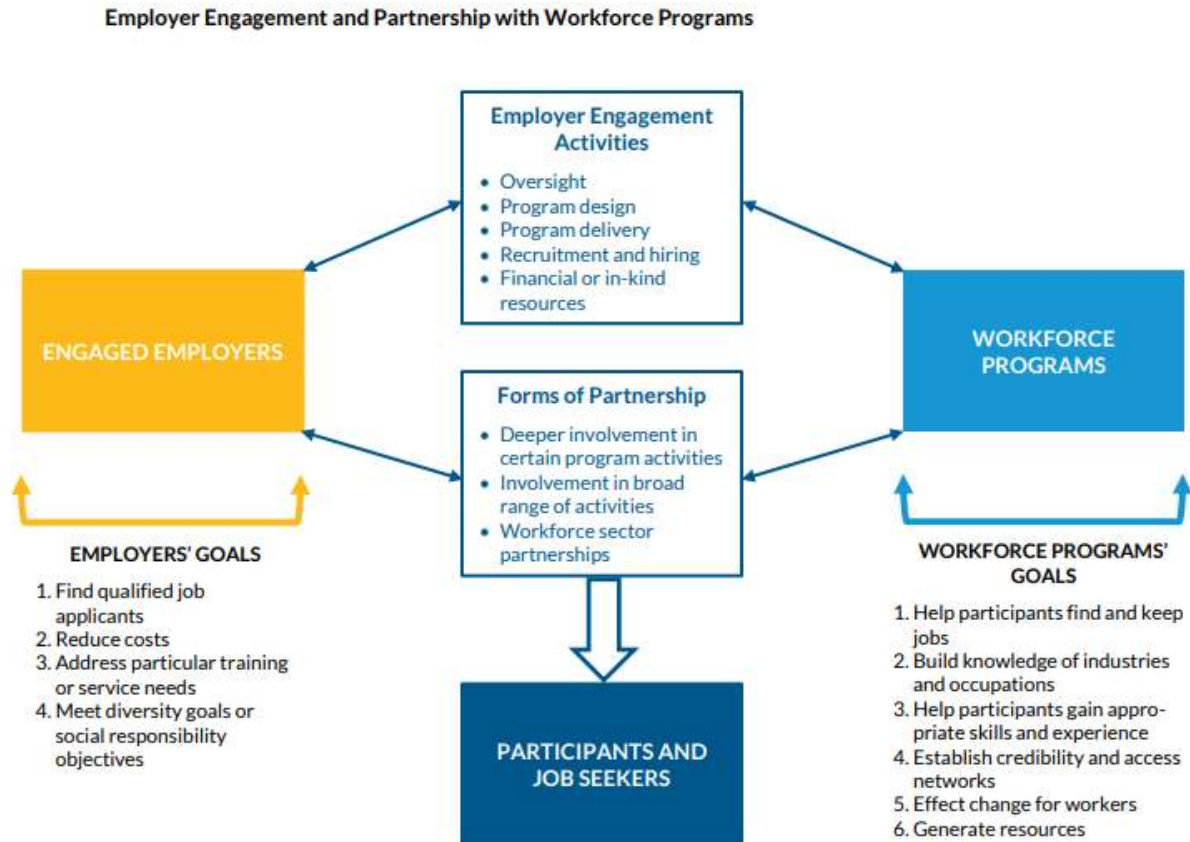
2. Promising workforce training programs include the opportunity for students to gain workplace experience in the course of their program of study.
3. Successful workforce training programs take an intensive approach to building students' math and technical skills. Many successful programs also provide students with academic support beyond that received in the college in general.
4. Successful STEM-focused workforce training programs develop in colleges that have strong leadership and a culture of innovation.
5. Finally, promising workforce training programs often have access to foundation or other outside funding sources.¹²

In regards to the exercise for this document, focus should be paid to the aforementioned list and item 1 and the inclusion of industry and employers in curricular development. It is noted that if employers and industries are not included, graduates may not be trained in current equipment or with the skills necessary to fill jobs. Alternatively, a lack of understanding of the job market can increase the potential of training workers for jobs that do not exist. Also discussed is the need for community colleges to play a role with overcoming obstacles that might exist when engaging industries. These could include, employers not wanting to work with one another and a community college if they are competing for market shares, labor, etc.; lack of a shared vocabulary – community colleges speak in education and pedagogies, while employers speak in business and economies, among issues.

The following figure from the Urban Institute¹³ highlights the relationship between workforce development programs and employers.

¹² (Soliz 2016)

¹³ (Spaulding and Martin-Caughey 2015)



Many of the articles reviewed for this document identified the importance of “navigators” who can provide support to building the relationships with workforce programs and employers. The creation of navigators as part of the eco-system for delivery of information between different groups will help ensure that information is shared in a consistent and productive manner.

Focusing on outcome improvements with minimal undesirable side effects

Investment in workforce development and participation is likely to yield undesirable side effects. However, the structure of how these services are provided and the emphasis and potential overlap of support in these areas could divert resources from other important policy areas of need. This underscores the importance of coordination at all levels of government, the utilization of data and clear channels of communication. Inherent in filling jobs and training workers, a focus often emerges on measuring success through inputs and participation rates rather than studying the overall outcome of a workforce engaged and earning a livable wage.

Applying an equity lense to the issue

The City of Evanston in 2017 embarked on an equity and empowerment initiative to raise awareness of equity issues citywide through training of all employees, partnerships with community organizations and the use of an equity lense in evaluating the City’s operations. This equity lense was first applied as pilot to the City’s

deliberations of the FY 2018 proposed budget and continued during 2018 as part of an evaluation of city services through a priority based budget process for FY 2019. The City looked at three key questions when evaluating services:

1. Who will benefit from or be burdened by the particular decision?
2. What are the racial equity impacts of this particular decision?
3. Are there strategies to mitigate unintended consequences of decisions?

The process during 2018 was messy as City staff tried to answer these questions about each program with staff members, elected officials and community members questioning not only the process, but how these questions were answered for each program being evaluated. No one believed the process brought a satisfactory outcome. But most believed it was important to ask these questions despite the difficulty in providing answers.

In the area of workforce development, these questions were asked of existing City programs. Specifically a proposal was made to broaden the City's existing efforts which are mainly geared toward 18-25 year olds and expand the program to reach a broader age range of people needing assistance. It was felt in the community and among some City staff that broadening the work would have a negative impact on those individuals currently being served and that particularly African American community members might be negatively impacted if the focus of the program was broadened.

There was no data available to support these concerns, but ultimately the Evanston City Council was unwilling to change the program without much additional study out of concern for the racial equity impact on changes to the City's workforce development program.

The Standing Panel may wish to consider adding a racial equity component to its list of criteria to apply to review policy areas.

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