

***Seismic System Shift:***

**Increase the Number of Customers  
Converting to Training Services**

**Six Strategies for Centers to  
Increase Training Access and Enrollments**

1. Increasing Training Offerings and Availability
2. Transforming Center Culture to Value Both Skills and Jobs for All
3. Setting Center Goals for Increased Training Enrollments
4. Promoting Training at Every Step, Continuously
5. Embedding Training Access into the Center Customer Flow
6. **Streamlining Processes to Make Training More Accessible**

***Strategy 6:***

**Streamlining Processes to Make Training More Accessible**

Clear procedures and processes are key to system change and increasing the number of One-Stop Center customers who access and enroll in training and skill development. Transposing new expectations on top of historical processes will not lead to new outcomes.

Fundamental re-thinking of the customer flow from “entry to enrollment” is required. Staff will only be able to implement a vision that is translated into the reality and the nitty-gritty of their day-to-day work. Only when there is a single document that clearly identifies “who does what when” can staff develop the understanding and skills needed to implement a functional customer flow where all process steps lead to a jointly achieved goal.

Local Workforce Areas and Centers must successfully execute their customer flow processes within a wide range of federal, state, and local policies and requirements: eligibility, data validation, data entry, initial assessment policies, TAA rules, Pell Grant application, ITA justification and approval, support services/needs related payments, and many others. All must be understood and implemented within real time.

The mere complexity and breadth of these mean that some staff do not have the clarity or comprehensive knowledge needed to both comply and meet expectations. Since these requirements are sometimes siloed, linear, unaligned, and unconnected there is a need to “connect the dots” within a single document that includes and aligns all relevant policies and requirements with the new goals.

Local Workforce Boards and One-Stop Centers will want to develop a comprehensive procedures manual to outline new customer flow processes that:

- Eliminates unnecessary steps and redundancies that waste the time of both customers and staff.
- Ensures that all process steps add value for the Center customer and support the goal of increasing training access and enrollments.
- Eliminates “paper work” that is not actually required.
- Reduces the cycle-time for the entire “entry to enrollment” process, as well as between each customer flow step
- Drives down decision-making, wherever possible, so that staff is empowered to make decisions that reduce cycle time
- Improves the conversion ratios of all customers who visit the Center and who actually enroll in training and skill development.

### **Using LEAN Manufacturing Principles to Increase Training Access**

Many of the leading manufacturers have improved their manufacturing process using LEAN principles. One-Stop Centers can use these principles, as well, to improve their customer flow and to increase access to training.

LEAN is “a systematic way to deliver the highest quality, lowest cost products with the shortest lead-times through the relentless elimination of waste.”

For One-Stop Centers to increase training access, the LEAN improvement process begins with the development of an “as is” customer flow that clearly specifies all required and actual steps from customer entry to training start. This customer flow is then analyzed to add value and remove waste.

“Added value” is defined as any process step that increases the perceived and actual value for the Center customer and increases the likelihood that Center customers will go on to access and enroll in training.

Examples of “entry to enrollment” process steps that typically add-value are:

- Presenting meaningful labor market information that helps customers understand how skill development and training will lead to better jobs at better wages
- Customizing services offered to meet a specific customer’s needs as identified in the initial and comprehensive assessment
- Helping customers clarify their career goals and offering specific services to help them attain them
- Providing a robust menu of training options and ensuring informed customer choice in selecting from them
- Bundling and providing financial resources to pay for training without customers needing to understand program requirements

“Waste” is defined as any step that does not add value to the desired outcome (i.e., more enrollments in training.) Waste should be eliminated, simplified, reduced, or integrated whenever possible. Reducing non-value added activities is the first step to process improvement.

There are two types of waste (i.e., non-value added activities): those required for business and those not required. One-Stop Center funding requirements and

regulations result in including process steps that would otherwise be considered waste. In those cases, business required (but not Center customer value-added) activities should be minimized, whenever possible, and viewed as necessary, but not as a driving purpose.

Examples of “entry to enrollment” process steps that may potentially be defined as “waste” (since they do not add-value to the Center customer and do not enhance the end result of enrolling more customers in training) are:

- Telling customers about what may be available to them instead of immediately initiating service delivery
- Handing-off customers between multiple program-specific staff instead of permitting all staff to be able to serve customers holistically
- Requiring multiple, unnecessary customer visits and meetings before customers can actually enroll in training
- “Testing for motivation” through requiring customers to take too many steps and complete too much “homework” before even being considered for training, and using these process steps to weed potential customers out
- Maintaining both paper and electronic files, even when only electronic records are required
- Going beyond what is actually required for eligibility documentation
- Assessing for training program entry requirements when the training provider will also be conducting a similar assessment
- Delaying approval of training for customers due to long lag times caused by multiple levels of approval authority

After developing the “as is” customer flow and analyzing the flow for where value can be added and where waste can be eliminated, Centers will want to develop a new customer flow with an eye toward continuous improvement. Workforce Board staff, Center Leadership, and all Center staff should act as a team in the improvement of the “entry to enrollment” process.

**Improving Center Processes to Increase Training Access and Enrollments**

The Recovery funds' emphasis on increasing the number of customers (including UI Claimants) in training, the reality of job-finding in a tough economy, and the emerging training focus of WIA reauthorization, means that Centers must begin to move more customers from the front desk, the resource area, and Reemployment Services into a vibrant skills development service track. Moving to a new skills and jobs organizational culture is imperative: work first doesn't work very well when there aren't many jobs!

Workforce Boards and Centers throughout the country are reinventing their customer flow to respond to these current and emerging expectations by integrating service delivery, giving staff the skills they need to promote skill-development services, and increasing training options that respond to regional economies and customer needs. Centers are mapping "the-front-desk-to-training-entry" process, eliminating low value-added bureaucratic steps, reducing cycle time, and developing an inclusive, not exclusive, strategy to help all customers get the skills they need to compete for the jobs they want.

**Greg Newton Associates would like to help you reinvent your customer flow to help your betters respond to the demands of today and position for even greater success tomorrow.**

**Write today to find out how we can help your system and center transform.**