

Why GAO Did This Study

To create a more comprehensive workforce investment system, the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 requires states and localities to coordinate most federally funded employment and training services into a single system, called the one-stop center system. This report examines how selected one-stop centers have used the law's flexibility to implement their own vision of WIA and provides information on promising practices for (1) streamlining services for job seekers, (2) engaging the employer community, (3) building a solid one-stop infrastructure by strengthening partnerships across programs and raising additional funds. In addition, it provides information on the actions the Department of Labor is taking to collect and share information about what is working well for job seeker and employer customers in one-stop centers.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of Labor collaborate with the Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and Housing and Urban Development to develop a research agenda that examines the impact of various approaches to one-stop program integration on outcomes, such as job placement and retention, and jobseeker and employer satisfaction. GAO also recommends that the Secretary conduct a systematic evaluation of the promising practices Web site and ensure that it is effective.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-725

To view the full report, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Dianne Blank at (202) 512-5654 or blankd@gao.gov.

WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT

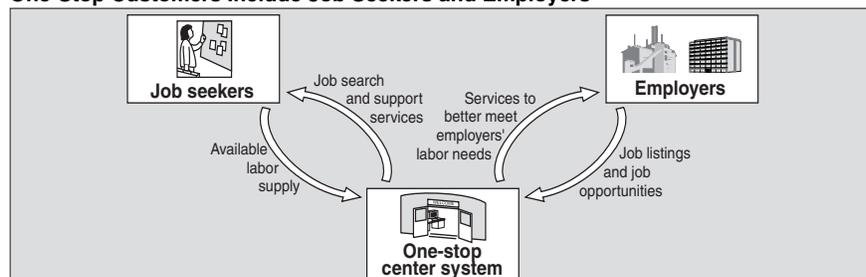
One-Stop Centers Implemented Strategies to Strengthen Services and Partnerships, but More Research and Information Sharing Is Needed

What GAO Found

Of the 14 one-stop centers in GAO's study that were identified as exemplary by government officials and workforce development experts, all had implemented a range of promising practices to streamline services for jobseekers, engage the employer community, and built a solid one-stop infrastructure. The one-stop centers GAO visited streamlined services for job seekers by ensuring access to needed services, educating program staff about all of the one-stop services available to job seekers, and consolidating case management and intake procedures. In addition, all of the one-stop centers GAO visited used at least one of the following three methods to engage employers—dedicating specialized staff to work with employers or industries, working with employers through intermediaries, such as Chambers of Commerce or economic development entities, or tailoring services to meet specific employers' needs. To provide the infrastructure to support better services for job seekers and employers, many of the one-stops GAO visited found innovative ways to strengthen program partnerships and to raise additional funds beyond those provided under WIA. Center operators fostered the development of strong program partnerships by encouraging partner collaboration through functional work teams and joint projects, and they raised additional funds through fee-based services, grants, and contributions from partners and state or local governments.

While Labor currently tracks outcome data—such as job placement, job seeker satisfaction and employer satisfaction—and funds several studies to evaluate workforce development programs and service delivery models, little is known about the impact of various one-stop service delivery approaches on these and other outcomes. Labor's studies largely take a program-by-program approach rather than focusing on the impact on job seekers of various one-stop integrated service delivery approaches, such as sharing customer intake forms across programs, or on employers, such as dedicating staff to focus on engaging and serving employers. Further, Labor's efforts to collaborate with other federal agencies to assess the effects of different strategies to integrate job seeker services or to serve employers through the one-stop system have been limited. While Labor has developed a promising practices Web site to facilitate such information sharing, it is unclear how well the site currently meets this objective.

One-Stop Customers Include Job Seekers and Employers



Source: GAO illustration. Clip art source: Art Explosion.