



TO: Andy Fiffick  
Chief Counsel for House Labor, Commerce and Industry Committee

FROM: Dr. Barry Russell  
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RE: Recommendations for Improving Collaboration between the South Carolina Technical College System and the Federal Workforce Investment System

DATE: December 17, 2009

As a follow up to our meeting of December 16, 2009 we are providing these informal recommendations regarding methods for seeking closer collaboration between the South Carolina Technical College System and the activities funded through Title 1 of the federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 in South Carolina. While we are aware that the federal legislation and regulations provide the parameters within which decisions concerning the federal workforce system can be made, we are encouraged by national-level discussions that clearly recognize that technical and community colleges should play a larger role. The current discussions regarding South Carolina's structure for administration of the federally funded workforce programs (including Unemployment Insurance, Wagner-Peyser, and WIA) provide an opportunity for the state to seek ways to ensure that the federal dollars support the education and workforce priorities identified by the state.

**Recommendation 1:**

***Adopt language that recognizes the pivotal role played by the technical colleges as the state's designated workforce education and training infrastructure.***

A primary reform introduced with passage of WIA in 1998 was the establishment of Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) meant to encourage consumer choice among providers of education and training. However, some states have incorporated language either in Executive Order or in legislation that highlights the role of the technical/community college system as the state's workforce education and training infrastructure.

For example, North Carolina Code §115D-1 states that "[t]he Community Colleges System Office is designated as the primary lead agency for delivering workforce development training, adult literacy training, and adult education programs in the state." Similarly, Alabama Executive Order Number 36 contains the following language: "BE IT FURTHER ORDERED that the Office of Workforce Development shall operate in full cooperation with the Department of Postsecondary Education which shall be the primary, but not sole, provider of workforce education and training."

While One-Stop case managers are only permitted to assist WIA-eligible participants in their selection among eligible training providers, adopting such language in South Carolina would place an emphasis on the state's desire to see a concerted effort toward making the technical colleges true "partners" and not mere "vendors" within the federally funded system.

**Recommendation 2:**

***Ensure the appointment of technical college representation to both the State Workforce investment Board (the “State WIB”) and local Workforce Investment Boards (“local WIBs).***

Appointments to the State WIB and the local WIBs as outlined in the WIA are to be made by the Governor and the chief elected official(s) in a local area, respectively. In outlining the membership requirements for the State WIB, the legislation states that the Board membership should generally include “representatives of individuals and organizations that have experience and expertise in the delivery of workforce investment activities, including chief executive officers of community colleges and community-based organizations within the State” (§111(b)(1)(C)(v)).

Appointments to local WIBs are made by chief elected officials (by County Council Chairpersons in South Carolina) in accordance with criteria established by the Governor and the State WIB. The legislation indicates that, among other educational entities, the local board shall include representatives of “postsecondary educational institutions (including representatives of community colleges, where such entities exist)” (§117(b)(2)(A)(ii)).

We recommend that this representation be reiterated at the state level to ensure the ongoing input and collaboration between the South Carolina Technical College System and the federal Workforce Investment System at all levels of administration and participation.

**Recommendation 3:**

***Encourage clear demonstration that the activities included within the required State Workforce Investment Board Plan (State Plan) and the local workforce investment plans (Local Plans) show alignment with the activities of the South Carolina Technical College System and the local technical colleges.***

Section 112 of WIA requires the submission of a State Plan outlining a 5-year strategy for the statewide workforce investment system. The section requires a period of public comment before submission of the State Plan to the US Department of Labor and also requires that the plan includes “information identifying how the State will use funds the state receives under this subtitle to leverage other Federal, State, local, and private resources, in order to maximize the effectiveness of such resources, and to expand the participation of business, employees, and individuals in the statewide workforce investment system” (§112(b)(9-10)). We believe that early consultation with the Technical College System and encouragement of support within the State Plan for priorities identified by the Technical College System would assist both entities in attaining strategic goals. The Technical College System is clearly one of the key resources of the state and we encourage that the use of funds received through WIA be used to “maximize the effectiveness of [this] resource” as outlined in the requirements delineated above.

We further recommend that similar encouragement of input and alignment between technical colleges and workforce investment boards be made at the local level within the Local Plans required for submission to the Governor under WIA Section 118.