

Strategic Plan



Iowa Workforce Development
December, 2002

Introduction

Iowa Workforce Development conducted a number of activities throughout the course of the year that have fed into the process of updating our strategic plan. Labor market, economic, fiscal, and legislative issues have been reviewed by the IWD Board and staff throughout the year. IWD conducted a series of 19 roundtables with Iowa businesses to gather their input into the services we offer and how we can improve those services. In addition, two business focus groups were held as part of a national business engagement consortium. Two regional input sessions were conducted in Burlington and Dubuque to allow field staff more input into the planning process and Iowa Excellence Assessment process.

The management staff of the department, along with representatives of partner agencies and AFSCME, met in July and August in two one-day retreats to review last year's plan and determine how it should be revised this year. The group refreshed its internal and external assessments, a brief summary of which is included in this document. We also reviewed our vision and mission statements and made a minor revision to the latter.

Much of the focus at these retreats was on refining our core functions and developing action plan strategies and measures for each. Finally, the group identified four broad goals that apply across core functions to the organization as a whole.

The division administrators, commissioners, director and deputy director reviewed and finalized suggestions from the retreat to formulate goals and strategies for the coming year.

The Director shared the draft strategic plan with all staff on October 17 via the ICN. The plan was sent to all staff via e-mail prior to the meeting. The Director outlined major changes to the plan from the previous year and reviewed the four main goals in the plan. Staff then had an opportunity to provide input and suggest changes.

Vision

Iowa Workforce Development envisions a future where Iowa has safe workplaces, a productive and economically secure workforce, and where Iowans are prepared for an ever-changing future.

Mission

IWD has a wide range of programs, customer groups and methods for delivering services. Many of our programs involve the federal/state partnerships that exist for such services as labor exchange, unemployment insurance, health and safety, and labor market information. Customers include job seekers, workers, employers, students, educators, researchers, journalists, and many others. We deliver some of our service directly through our statewide network of workforce development centers, while other services are contracted to sub-state service providers. We are also making increased use of the Internet for critical service transactions.

While it is difficult for a brief mission statement to reflect all of these variations, we did revise it slightly this year to reflect IWD's role in ensuring health, as well as safety, in the workplace and elsewhere.

Iowa Workforce Development will provide quality, customer-driven services that support prosperity, productivity, health and safety for Iowans.

Guiding Principles

- Integrity
- Results/outcome orientation
- Collaboration and partnership (internal and external)
- Data-based decisions
- Long-term thinking
- Manage diverse resources
- Honor and respect diversity
- Customer focus
- Leadership in the New Economy
- Model the characteristics of a high performance workplace. These characteristics include:
 - Investing in the knowledge and skills of the workers and paying them accordingly
 - Striving to continually improve processes
 - Building flexibility, responsiveness and innovation into the workplace
 - Empowering all staff (as well as customers and stakeholders)
 - Fostering teamwork
 - Deploying technology effectively
 - Tracking rapidly changing conditions, and
 - Anticipating and responding quickly to changing customer needs and wants

Internal and External Assessment

The department conducts a number of activities throughout the year to assess our performance, market position, and satisfaction of internal and external customers. Before retreat participants were asked to brainstorm and prioritize the department's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, participants were provided with summaries of the following input mechanisms:

- Regional needs assessments and plans prepared by the sixteen Regional Workforce Investment Boards in Iowa identified the following key issues:
 - Skills gap between the skills of the existing workforce and available jobs
 - Availability of qualified workers
 - Support services for workers (transportation, child care, etc.)
 - Soft skills of workers (being on time, calling when late, etc.)
 - Employers' ability or inability to train workers
- Iowa businesses that participated in the nineteen business roundtables recommended the following areas of opportunities:
 - Marketing our services – businesses are not aware of our services

- Quality of IWD referrals for job openings
 - Screening of applicants
 - IWD is the human resource department for smaller businesses
 - Businesses lack knowledge about employment laws and related issues
- Results of business focus groups conducted as part of a multi-state marketing research project for workforce departments are summarized below:
 - Interest in state services for employers focus on 4 areas: screening and verification of applicants (great skepticism that the state can deliver); basic skills training; rules and regulations (easy to navigate Web site was of great interest); market development.
- Summary of the key findings from IWD's 2001 employee survey:
 - Management issues – favoritism, supervisors lack needed management skills, fairness, 28E agreements, etc.
 - Personnel issues – evaluations, recognition, discipline, equity in administering personnel policies, lack of promotions
 - Morale and stress – lower staffing, higher expectations
 - Technology issues – common intake, complicated systems, staff desire more input from users in the design of systems, etc.
 - Leadership issues – staff request that leadership set clear goals and directions
- Summary of the input received from sessions conducted with field staff during the summer:
 - Improve image – more marketing - identity as a sustainable entity
 - Technology system that works
 - Employer connection, including assessment tool to help better screen and match; training on instrument
 - Improve customer service
 - Support staff

Participants brainstormed strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities, and then ranked them in order of importance. A brief summary of our assessment follows:

Strengths:

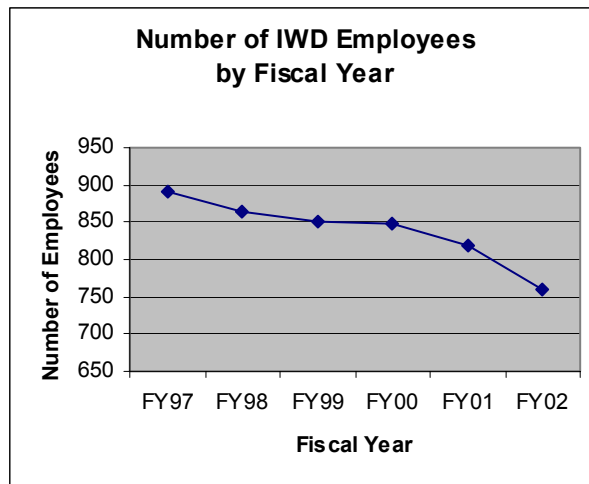
Most of the internal strengths identified related to our employees. Our staff are sincerely devoted to serving IWD’s customers, possess broad knowledge of workforce issues, and demonstrate innovation and creativity. IWD does a good job of addressing our customers’ concerns.

The following responses to the 2001 IWD employee survey illustrate why IWD employees were identified as our number one internal strength:

- 94.3% answered strongly agree or agree to the statement “I understand who my customers are.”
- 97.2% answered strongly agree or agree to the statement “I listen to what my customers have to say.”
- 85.5% answered strongly agree or agree to the statement “The product or service I provide to my customers is delivered in a timely manner”.

Weaknesses:

Most of the major internal weaknesses identified relate to the marked reduction in employees during the past year due to reduced budgets. Fewer staff people are responsible for the same (or even increased) amount of work, and there is a dearth of trained back-up staff to fill in when necessary. IWD’s incipient succession planning efforts have been hampered as a result of staff reductions. These factors, along with the uncertainty caused by ongoing revenue shortfalls, have contributed to staff morale issues.



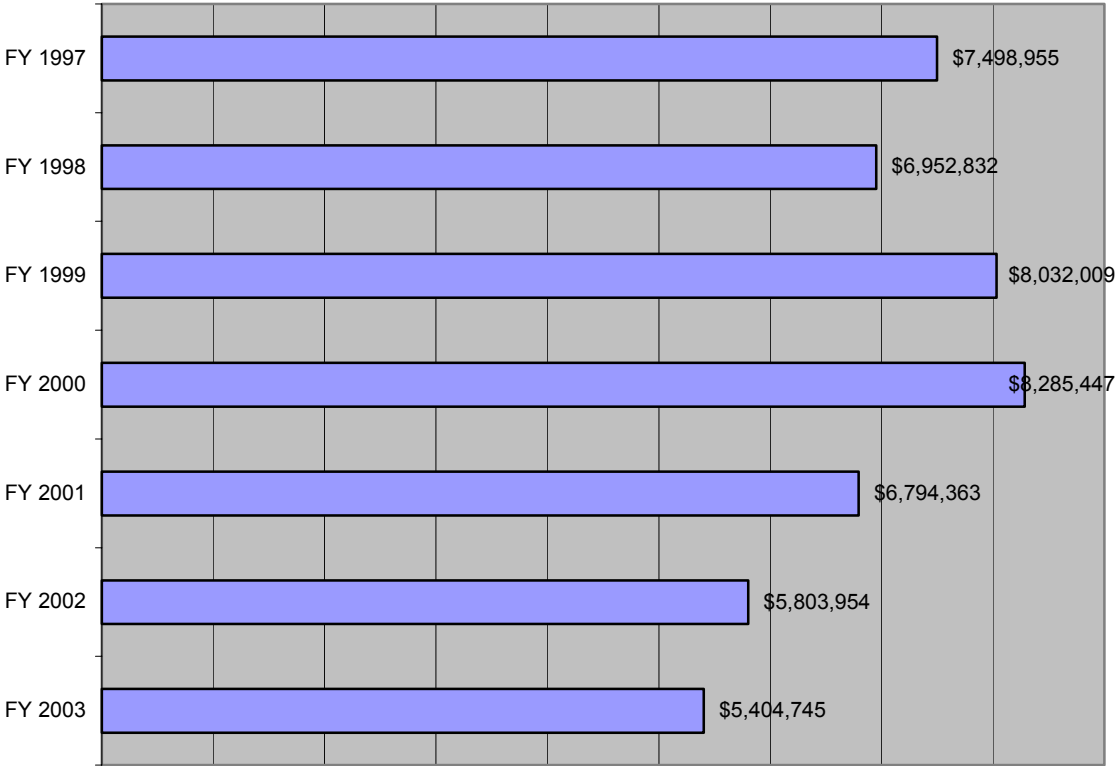
Threats:

The planning team identified a number of actual or potential threats. Some, including the slow pace of the current economic recovery and the loss of many

experienced staff as a result of layoffs and early retirement incentives, relate directly to funding shortfalls. Others involved external mandates to implement new programs or make sudden shifts in direction with minimal lead-time, and an overall environment that often tends to be hostile to the public sector.

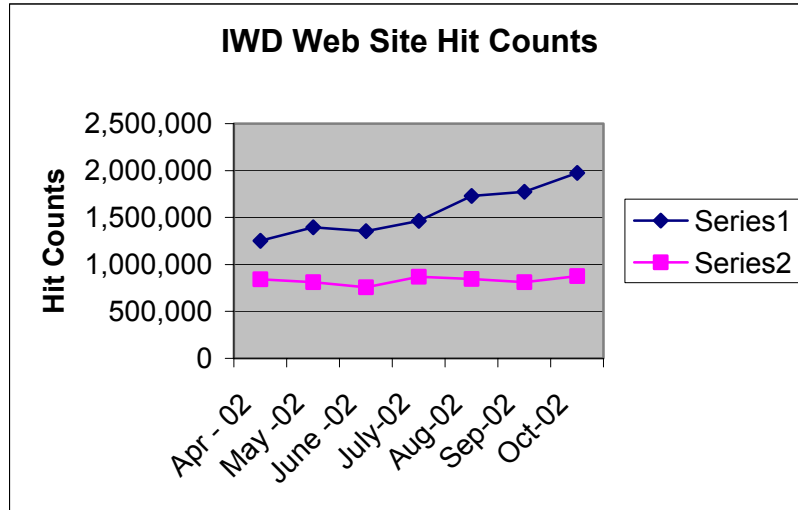
Over the past four fiscal years, IWD has had 139 employees retire. In Fiscal Year 02 alone, IWD had 67 retirements and was forced to lay off 8 colleagues due to budget cuts.

Iowa Workforce Development General Fund -- FY 1997 to 2003



Opportunities:

While revenue shortfalls will remain a persistent problem, some one-time opportunities exist due to the accelerated distribution of Reed Act (Unemployment Insurance) funds. Technology also offers opportunities to improve the timeliness, efficiency and accuracy of some functions in the form of electronic transactions, especially in the Unemployment Insurance tax redesign project. IWD has been exploring new opportunities to provide objective labor market information to help a variety of groups and individuals make sound decisions. The team also concluded that there are untapped opportunities to inform state and local organizations about the full array of our services, which will make them more accessible as well as generate additional public support.



Series 1 = Hits Counts for www.iowaforce.org
 Series 2 = Hit Counts for www.ioajobs.org

In FY02 the Unemployment Insurance Service Center began offering customers the option of filing new unemployment insurance (UI) claims online. 25% of UI claimants are currently using this option for filing their claim.

Agency-wide Goals, Strategies and Measures

The planning team identified four broad goals for Iowa Workforce Development that cut across core functions. These goals, along with the strategies and measures that apply to each, are:

1. **Grow Iowa's skilled workforce.**

(Lead Entity: Workforce Development Center Administration Division)

Strategies:

- a. Expand and enhance outreach efforts to our business customers in order to focus more clearly on business needs and how IWD can address them.
- b. Continue to promote and recognize the growth of the one-stop delivery system in our Workforce Centers through building partnerships and improving employment and training services.
- c. Provide specialized services and projects for segments of the population that are under-represented in the workforce.
- d. Establish a skills-based, electronic job matching system to improve access and service to jobseekers and businesses.

Measures:

- a. Business contacts in all regions.
- b. Number of job orders from businesses.
- c. Number of job placements through local offices.
- d. Entered employment rates of training programs for all participants and under-represented groups.

2. **Improve products and services based on customer input.**

(Lead Entity: Workforce Development Center Administration, Unemployment Insurance and Administrative Services Divisions)

Strategies:

- a. Improve job-matching process by researching and deploying tools for better applicant assessment.
- b. Redesign the unemployment tax system.
- c. Design a single, comprehensive technology system that tracks needed information for all divisions.

A number of second-tier strategies were also identified for this goal.

Measures:

- a. Internal and external customer satisfaction rates.

3. Improve data and performance measurement systems for informed decision-making.

(Lead Entity: Workforce Development Center Administration and Administrative Services Divisions)

Strategies:

- a. Implement a simplified, coordinated system to collect performance data from the field.
- b. Refine our in-house systems to collect and report financial and performance information.
- c. Make decision-support information more readily available.

Measures:

- a. Develop and implement performance data collection and reporting plan.
- b. Responses to Employee Survey.
- c. Customer satisfaction rates of internal customers.

4. Improve communications both internally and externally.

(Lead Entity: Policy and Information Division)

Strategies:

- a. Develop and implement plan to address both internal and external communications.
- b. Develop and implement a plan to better market our services to businesses.

Measures:

- a. Business contacts.
- b. Web site hit counts.
- c. Responses to Employee Survey.

IWD Core Functions

All of Iowa Workforce Development's activities, services and products fall within six core functions:

1. Workforce Development Services – The purpose of this core function is to provide those services necessary to promote a successful labor exchange system for businesses and job seekers. It includes job matching and placement, Unemployment Insurance claims services, skill assessment and enhancement, provision of child labor forms and information, specialized services for various population groups, and many other services for employers and job seekers.

2. Economic Supports/Unemployment Insurance – The purpose of this core function is to provide temporary funds for eligible, unemployed workers in order to maintain Iowa's skilled workforce and stabilize Iowa's economy. It includes Iowa's Unemployment Insurance services and child support intercept linkages.

3. Research, Analysis and Information Management – The purpose of this core function is to develop and provide workforce information and analysis to help customers make sound labor market decisions. It includes a large number of activities and services to collect and disseminate information including unemployment rates, occupational, employment and industry trends, wage rates, the solvency of Iowa's Unemployment Insurance trust fund, labor availability studies, and other research.

4. Regulation and Compliance/Labor Services – The purpose of this core function is to enhance the safety, health and economic well being of Iowa's workforce and public through consultation and enforcement of state regulations. It includes a number of activities and services including occupational safety and health enforcement, consultation and education, elevator, amusement ride, and boiler safety, child labor, wage collection, and various licensing, permit, and registration activities.

5. Adjudication/Dispute Resolution – The purpose of this core function is to educate, enforce and adjudicate the rights and duties of workers and employers under workers' compensation and unemployment insurance laws to stabilize lowans' incomes during periods for work-related injuries and unemployment and provide employers with fair, reasonable and predictable employment standards. It includes Worker's Compensation adjudication, compliance and education services as well as appeals and education activities for Iowa's Unemployment Insurance system.

6. Resource Management – The purpose of this core function is to provide customer support services for the Department and Workforce Development Board. It includes a range of services to assist the other core functions, including financial and personnel services, information technology support, and maintenance of our physical infrastructure.