

	New Jersey Workforce Innovation Notice		WD-PY23-3
	Issued By:	Workforce Development Division of Career Services	
	Approved By:	Dr. Yolanda Allen, Assistant Commissioner Workforce Development	
	Issued Date:	September 19, 2023	

SUBJECT: Functional Alignment in American Job Centers

EFFECTIVE DATE: This policy is effective **immediately**.

POLICY RESCISSIONS: None.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Questions about this policy may be directed to WIOAPOLICY@dol.nj.gov.

PURPOSE:

This policy addresses the functional alignment of New Jersey’s One Stop Career Centers/American Job Centers (AJCs), to improve efficiency and prevent duplication of services. It provides Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs), One Stop Operators, and other workforce system stakeholders with guidance concerning the continued development of a seamless, statewide One Stop service delivery system under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

BACKGROUND: About American Job Centers (AJCs) and Functional Alignment

WIOA reinforces the centrality of partnerships and coordinated strategies in driving and delivering a comprehensive set of services **driven by multiple partners and programs** to meet the **needs of a diverse customer base** through a **variety of pathways and supports**. Figure 1 below provides an overview of this system of partners, customers, and supports provided through New Jersey’s American Job Centers.

Partners and Programs	Customers	Pathways and Supports
<p>WIOA mandates the coordination of services across 13 unique federal programs. In addition, New Jersey has expanded this list of partners to include specific state workforce partners. An overview of all required and recommended partners is highlighted in WD-PY22-3.</p>	<p>WIOA includes resources for supporting a diverse customer base, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jobseekers • Workers in need of upskilling • Employers <p>New Jersey’s One Stop Career Centers must be accessible and provide services to all.</p>	<p>Services and supports include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skill and interest assessments • Individualized career counseling and support • Basic skills training • Occupational skills training • Work-based learning opportunities • Supportive services • Job search, placement, and retention supports

The Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB), with the support of the One Stop Operator, plays a critical role in organizing and supporting the work of the AJC around core functions that leverage and support the full set of partners, customers, and services highlighted above. This policy outlines the functions that each AJC must serve. NJDOL does not prescribe a specific staffing model, the proportion of resources that must be devoted to each function, or staff titles or positions performing specific functions. The LWDB and One Stop Operator must coordinate to ensure all functions are negotiated and executed among staff and partners.

This policy describes functional work structures and offers guidance for suggested functions in One Stop networks. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) among partners, which includes ways that partners will work together, lay the groundwork for institutionalizing functional alignment.

Formal and Functional Work Structures

To ensure seamless service delivery to workforce system customers, all individuals working in a One Stop will organize their work in two ways:

1. Formal Supervision
2. Functional Alignment

1. Formal Supervision

An employee will be formally supervised by their employer of record, which can be the LWDB, the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, a partner program, and/or a contracted service provider (e.g., One Stop Operator, One Stop Career Services provider). The formal supervisor retains authority over all actions that may affect the current base pay, status, or tenure of classified State employees. Formal supervisors oversee issues that include:

- Establish hours of work and schedules
- Approve vacations, sick leave, and personal leave
- Approve travel and travel expenses

- Ensure staff are adequately trained on their respective program rules and regulations
- Ensure staff are capable of effectively delivering program services and activities within a seamless service delivery environment
- Take responsibility for, and retain sole discretion for, anything that may affect the current base pay, status, and tenure of their respective staff, or any of the following employee actions such as:
 - Hiring;
 - Promotion;
 - Termination;
 - Counseling and corrective or disciplinary action;
 - Grievances;
 - Permanent assignments;
 - Permanent transfer;
 - Performance evaluations;
 - Timesheets and leave approval (eCATS for New Jersey State employees); and
 - Approval of costs not addressed.

2. Functional Alignment

A functional leader has the responsibility of organizing staff activity according to agreements that have been put in place to facilitate and support service integration. Functional alignment requires that teams with different formal supervision structures engage day-to-day in shared service delivery efforts and workflow. The functional leader oversees these efforts.

Each comprehensive AJC is encouraged to structure functional alignment with staff identified as a Team Lead for each of the functions in the “Establishment of Functional Teams” section of this policy. The Team Lead can be from any program and supported by any funding stream, and works with staff across the One Stop to execute the programs and activities that combine to support the assigned function.

Team Leads collaborate as a group with the One Stop Operator to:

- Create staffing plans that provide adequate office and service coverage either in person or virtually at all times, during standard hours of operation. The staffing plans should allow fair and equitable opportunity for time off, be consistent with an individual’s formal benefits, and coordinate with any formal supervisory recommendations
- Ensure all staff members are adequately trained
- Identify and promote cross-training opportunities
- Facilitate co-enrollment of customers
- Participate in cross-training of staff
- Ensure that all staff members adhere to applicable LWDB policies and procedures

Establishment of Functional Teams

Functional teams align with the different aspects of customer flow and service delivery and will include staff employed by various programs. Functional teams should be led by an assigned Team Lead and include a cross-section of staff. Individual staff may be part of more than one functional team.

By organizing in functional teams, the different resources and opportunities of individual programs and funding streams can contribute to a single workstream, rather than duplicating and replicating similar services as siloed activities. This policy offers a framework for a proposed set of functions but does not specifically prescribe functions required for New Jersey AJCs.

Not every activity or service offered at a One Stop will fall cleanly into one of the functions described in this policy. LWDBs should use this framework to organize the main functions of the workforce system, recognizing that other services support customers' employment pathways.

NJDOL encourages LWDBs to use this framework to identify and establish functional teams in consultation with their One Stop Operator and various required partners, to develop a structure that makes sense for their specific local areas. LWDBs and partners may decide to establish additional or different functions and functional teams.

Recommended Functional Teams



The suggested functions combine services to both of the main customer bases of the One Stop system: employers and job seekers. Considering functional alignment helps connect those customers as well as facilitate serving them with integrated programs.

1. Welcome and Intake Function

The Intake function ensures that all visitors to the AJC are welcomed, receive appropriate orientation, are directed to services and resources. The Intake function should be shared among all AJC partners located on site to deliver services, monitor AJC traffic and resource use, and connect customers to appropriate partner resources. Cross training of Intake staff in the services, eligibility requirements, and policies of all required one stop partners is critical.

The Intake function generally begins with providing an [intake form](#), complaint procedures, and Equal Opportunity information. Participants must be checked in and evaluated to determine reasons for the visit, barriers to employment, service needs, and to determine eligibility and priority for accessing services; and to track customer flow.

The intake function may be performed by staff paid for through the Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA).

Every job seeker must have access to basic career services through the welcome process. Services associated with the Intake function must include the following:

- Orientation to inform applicants and participants of all AJC services
- Access to the resource room and information concerning other programs and services
- Labor market information about the LWDA.
- Initial assessment of customer needs for available AJC services
- Referral to WIOA partner programs for eligibility determination and additional planning

Orientation and welcome activities should also reflect functional alignment of programs, providing and sharing information around the collection of services to which individuals have access rather than identifying resources based on funding stream.

After being welcomed, customers should be assessed for appropriate services and eligibility. It is important that the intake function distinguish among various levels of eligibility for services; for example, a customer can be eligible for WIOA Title I services without being eligible for particular training. Undocumented persons can receive Title II services but may not be eligible for others.

The Intake function also includes the resource room, self-directed activities, and staff-assisted services with few staff members involved. Job seekers must be encouraged to register with New Jersey Job Source.

2. Comprehensive Assessment Function

After an initial assessment to assist customers in identifying initial resources, the Comprehensive Assessment Function involves testing and other assessments to ensure appropriate employment and support services. Assessments gauge both educational and occupational needs.

The WIOA Title I Assessment Technical Assistance Guide outlines appropriate testing instruments and strategies. The assessment function should answer the following questions in five key areas:

- Documentation of eligibility: How does the individual meet Title I eligibility criteria? What information does this offer about the individual's needs and strengths?
- Service needs and assets: What supports and additional skills does this individual need to obtain or retain employment at a self-sufficient wage level (or at higher wages than previous employment)?
- Connection to strong career pathway: How do employment and/or education goals link to in-demand occupations and potential for employment opportunities accessible to the individual?
- Service strategies: What supports will help to ensure the successful placement and retention of this individual in employment connected to the identified career pathway?
- Likelihood of successful participation: Does the individual have the skills, qualifications, and support to successfully participate in the services that the counselor and individual identify based on assessment results?

3. Career Planning and Coaching Function

The Career Planning and Coaching function uses the assessment to develop and implement an individualized service and employment plan. In this function, partners work collaboratively to sequence training and educational opportunities for customers and to create true pathways to employment and careers. This function also provides ongoing coaching throughout a participant's engagement with partners and programs.

Activities in the Career Planning and Coaching function include:

- Using skills test results to identify opportunities
- Identifying training and skills development interests
- Development of an individualized career and career training plan
- Provision of Labor Market Information (LMI)
- Supporting employees who have been impacted by a reduction
- Incorporating business and employer needs and opportunities into career planning
- Ongoing coaching, including adjustment of or additions to the training plan

4. Skills Development Functions

The skill development functions are the core of the AJC. Staff across these functions help AJC customers build their skills and connect them to jobs, regardless of the program or reason the customer may have entered the system. They include the individualized career services, basic career services, training services, and business services required by WIOA. Staff engaged in skills development functions provide case management to participants receiving services within the AJC system.

These skills development functions are not necessarily sequential and a customer may receive services in some functions but not others, or may receive several services in the same function. The activities listed in each function are not comprehensive but should provide LWDBs with general guidance on how they might organize functions and teams.

<p>4.A. Skills Development: Occupational Skills Training</p> <p>This function prepares job seekers for employment linked to careers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal training classes • Work readiness services • Financial literacy training • English language acquisition 	<p>4.B. Skills Development: Work-Based Learning</p> <p>The Work-Based learning function focuses on connecting jobseekers and employers to provide work experiences that are linked to careers, including internships, apprenticeship opportunities, and On-the-Job Training (OJT) services. This function should closely involve the business services staff and programs.</p>	<p>4.C. Skills Development: Job Search and Placement</p> <p>The Job Search and Placement Function involves supporting jobseekers and employers in matching qualified employees to opportunities for careers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting businesses and jobseekers through job fairs and recruitment activities, customized for both parties • Screening and referral of qualified applicants to employers with vacancies • Providing appropriate job listings
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5. Transition Success Function

Providing jobseekers with additional supports is important in building career pathways. The Transition Success function ensures that AJC customers have the support they need for success in the skills development function or any other next steps in employment or educational opportunities. It involves continuing case management and :

- Referral to and follow-up on an array of appropriate supportive services
- Ongoing connections to GA, SNAP, Unemployment Insurance, or other services that may have prompted entry into the AJC
- Follow-up career services

6. Processes and Recordkeeping Function

High-quality data entry and tracking of customer needs and interactions is critical to the effective integration of the AJC. This function will:

- Ensure all necessary staff are trained on America's One Stop Operating System (AOSOS)
- Determine ways to share data among programs and partners that use a different data entry system
- Share data and reports among partners and programs
- Ensure data validation
- Track outcomes and performance measures
- Oversee referral processes and procedures
- Identify other processes or coordination necessary for effective functional alignment

Institutionalizing Functional Alignment

The development of functional teams, the coordination of formal and functional supervision, and coordinating activities should be built into operating processes of the AJC and agreements, in particular the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among One Stop partners. It should inform the meetings and communication among One Stop partners.

The MOU includes service agreements for programs; information-sharing, co-enrollment, and referral strategies; opportunities for cross-training; and other ways to support seamless provision of services. It also outlines the hours of operation of American Job Centers and the staffing structures that support those operations. The Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) that is part of the MOU can include contributions toward cross-training.

In addition, to organizing around functional teams, functional alignment also depends on specific coordinating activities that can help to support transitions between services and programs, especially when accessing services supported through different funding streams. This includes establishing clearing processes and protocols for co-enrollment, and for referrals and hand-offs to partners; and ensuring regular cross-training of all staff and partners.

Co-Enrollment Activities

Co-enrollment maximizes benefits for customers by ensuring they have immediate and seamless access to the full range of services for which they are eligible. When participants are co-enrolled in as many programs as possible, staff share accountability and responsibilities for supporting participants to meet their goals and objectives. Furthermore, multiple pathways open up from the start of engagement offering the opportunities to pivot service strategies and support new needs as they arise without returning to concerns and/or questions about eligibility.

LWDBs, One Stop Operators, and One Stop service partners must establish joint processes for sharing eligibility documentation, ensuring eligibility criteria are entered into respective data systems, and connecting specific staff to coordinate activities with eligible customers. They may incorporate this into the Processes and Recordkeeping function.

In addition, staff from co-enrolled programs must have processes in place for coordinating assessment, service plan development, case management through training and work-based learning opportunities, and additional job supports on an ongoing basis for shared customers.

Additional co-enrollment priorities may be established in specific local areas based on need and resource levels that exist.

Referral Activities

Connecting customers among programs and partners is an essential activity in ensuring that they have necessary supports and training to move along a career pathway. Because functional alignment and functional teams involve staff from different funding streams and programs working together, functional alignment can facilitate referrals among programs.

Well-coordinated referral strategies can ensure “warm” handoffs among partners and support effective data entry. Effective referral helps both employee and employer customers receive all of the services appropriate to their situation and needs. Each functional team can develop strategies for referring customers into other programs within the function, or to other functions; the Processes and Recordkeeping functional team should ensure that referral processes are developed and followed through all One Stop programs.

Cross-training

Training and professional development are key to effective functional alignment. If staff are knowledgeable about all programs, customers receive the most up-to-date information and the best matches and connections to services. Oversight of the AJC and its functional alignment should include regular cross-training as part of staff professional development. Offsite partners can be important resources for cross-training. Cross-training can include formal workshops and presentations; informal discussions; and ongoing strategies to keep all partners apprised of current programs and services.

References:

[Training and Employment Guidance Letter 16-16](#), One-Stop Operations Guidance for the American Job Center Network

[WD-PY-19-5](#), One-Stop Career Center (OSCC) Testing and Intake Guidance

[WD-PY-21-6](#), Local Governance Policy

[WD-PY-22-3](#), One Stop Career Center Partners

[WD-PY-22-4.2](#), New Jersey Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Infrastructure Funding Agreement

[WD-PY22-6](#), American Job Center Requirements

[WIOA Title I Assessment Technical Assistance Guide](#)

[WIOA Title I Supportive Services Technical Assistance Guide](#)

WD-PY23-5, Workforce Service Integration and Co-Enrollment