Wisconsin Workforce Development Association
and Consortium

Evaluation of
Skills Wisconsin

Baseline Report

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 The Skills Wisconsin Initiative</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Key Organizations in Wisconsin’s Workforce System</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Characteristics of Wisconsin’s WDAs</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. HOW DOES THE WORKFORCE SYSTEM OPERATE NOW?</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Approach</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Communication among Workforce System Stakeholders</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Identifying the Workforce Skills Employers Want in Jobseekers</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Communicating Employer Needs to Training Providers</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. HOW DO EMPLOYERS FEEL ABOUT THE WORKFORCE SYSTEM?</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Survey Implementation</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Survey Results</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Summary</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix A. Site Visit Discussion Guides  
Appendix B. Employer Survey Results
# TABLE OF EXHIBITS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exhibit</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Wisconsin WDAs</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Characteristics of WDAs</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sample Site Visit Itinerary</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>A Network Map</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Network Centralization Examples</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Statewide Network Map</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Network Centralization Measures</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Survey Sample</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Characteristics of Survey Respondents and Non-Respondents</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Employer Interaction with the Workforce System</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Employer Interaction with the Workforce System, by Industry</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Employer Interaction with the Workforce System, by Number of Employees</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Employer Rating of Jobseeker Quality</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Employer Rating of Jobseeker Quality by Industry</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Employer Rating of Jobseeker Quality by Number of Employees</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Employer Rating of Jobseeker Quality by Industry</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Employer Satisfaction with Services Received</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Employer Satisfaction with Services Received, by Industry</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Employer Satisfaction with Services Received, by Number of Employees</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Employer Ratings of How Well the Workforce System Serves Businesses</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Employer Ratings of How Well the Workforce System Serves Businesses, by Industry</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Employer Ratings of How Well the Workforce System Serves Businesses, by Number of Employees</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

IMPAQ International, LLC was contracted by the Workforce Development Board (WDB) of South Central Wisconsin, the leader of a Consortium of all the WDBs in the state, to conduct an independent evaluation of the Skills Wisconsin program. Funded by the U.S. Department of Labor’s (DOL) Workforce Innovation Fund (WIF) program, Skills Wisconsin aims to improve communication among workforce development stakeholders throughout the state. The project’s premise is that to effectively serve not only jobseekers but also employers in the communities in which they operate, workforce development stakeholders must have a keen awareness of labor market conditions—including both employer needs and workforce skills. Recent developments in cloud-based computing applications provide workforce development stakeholders with an opportunity to move toward a more systematic, user-friendly, and integrated method of connecting the two sides of the labor market, by increasing coordination among workforce development, economic development, and the training community. Accordingly, the Consortium will implement Salesforce, a cloud-based customer relationship management application, in each of the state’s 11 Workforce Development Areas (WDAs) during the grant period. Other program activities include training staff in a demand-driven model of workforce development and expanding industry partnerships. The Skills Wisconsin evaluation will include a quasi-experimental impact evaluation, a process study, and an outcomes analysis.

IMPAQ’s Baseline Report presents the results of the first year of the third-party evaluation of the Skills Wisconsin initiative. Evaluation activities to date have focused on gathering baseline information for the process study and the outcomes analysis. Toward that end, the evaluation has focused on understanding how Wisconsin’s workforce system operated before implementation of the program. Once the grant is finished, IMPAQ will gather similar information about the workforce system. Comparing the data gathered at the end of the grant to the data gathered before implementation will thus show whether and how the workforce system changed as Skills Wisconsin was implemented.

Process Study. Based on the objectives of the Skills Wisconsin program, the process study is focused on identifying how the program ultimately affects the answers to three main research questions:

- How do workforce development professionals and stakeholders communicate and share information?
- How do workforce development professionals communicate employer skill needs to the training community?
- How do workforce development professionals and stakeholders ensure that the training received by job seekers will meet employer needs?

To answer these research questions for the pre-program workforce system, IMPAQ used a two-pronged approach:
• **In-person interviews**—First, we gathered qualitative information from key workforce system stakeholders through semi-structured in-person interviews conducted during site visits to all 11 WDAs. In addition to these interviews, each site visit featured a focus group with a small number of jobseekers. We then analyzed the interview and focus group data to identify common themes and patterns among responses.

• **Social network data**—Second, we gathered quantitative information on communication patterns using a social network analysis (SNA) questionnaire. Using the data from the questionnaire, we constructed a diagram of the statewide communication network. For both individual WDAs and the state we also calculated quantitative measures of network activity.

**Findings Based on Interview and Social Network Data.** The qualitative data we gathered from the site visits showed that there is generally a significant amount of communication among stakeholders in the workforce system. This was confirmed by the SNA, which showed that communication patterns within the workforce system are relatively diffuse, rather than concentrated among a small number of key players. Some key findings from the interview data include:

• There is often little coordination across either different types of organizations or WDAs, particularly regarding interactions with employers.

• In some cases, sophisticated software tools are used to manage contact with employers. In others, individual staff may track their own interactions independently using their own ad-hoc method (e.g., a desktop spreadsheet).

• It is not uncommon for information, particularly any employer information that might be regarded as sensitive, to be guarded by the organization that receives it. Employer relationships are highly valuable and take time and effort to cultivate. In some cases, the perceived risk that sharing employer information could damage those relationships causes organizations to be hesitant to share that information with others in the workforce system.

• There are multiple channels by which input from employers is translated into actual training programs for jobseekers. Multiple stakeholders, including WDBs, Business Service Representatives (BSRs) at Job Centers, and representatives from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) or other economic development organizations (EDOs) often act as intermediaries between employers and the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) or other training providers. Direct communication between employers and the training community is also typical.

• The fruit of these information exchanges—the training programs developed by WTCS and others—are generally seen as responsive, though there is a feeling that soft skills could be emphasized more, and that more could be done to increase awareness among employers about the types of services offered through the workforce system.
Outcomes Analysis. The outcomes analysis component of the evaluation focuses on documenting key program outcome measures over the grant period in order to observe whether Skills Wisconsin is associated with improvements in these measures. In addition to the grant performance metrics reported to DOL, other key Skills Wisconsin outcome measures include employer perceptions of and satisfaction with the services provided by the workforce system. To establish a baseline of employer sentiment, IMPAQ conducted the first wave of an employer survey, targeting businesses in the state that had recent open job orders. The survey was administered in April-May 2013 to a sample of 4,995 businesses throughout the state. IMPAQ received 1,193 completed responses, a response rate of 24 percent.

Findings from the Employer Survey. The survey responses of nearly 1,200 employers show that Wisconsin businesses have a generally favorable opinion of Wisconsin’s workforce system. Three of the main questions in the survey asked employers about:

- How they would rate the quality of jobseekers referred to them by the workforce system
- Their level of satisfaction with the services they had received from the workforce system
- Their rating of how well the workforce system in Wisconsin serves businesses in the state.

As shown in Exhibit ES.1, two-thirds of employers rated the jobseekers referred to them by the workforce system as being of average quality. Roughly 25 percent gave jobseekers a below-average rating and the remaining 8 percent an above-average rating.

Further analysis also revealed that employer perceptions of jobseeker quality varied by industry:

- Employers in the accommodation and food services; health care and social assistance; and professional, scientific, and technical services industries were more likely than employers in other industries to give jobseekers above-average ratings.
- Employers in the finance and insurance industry and the administrative support, waste management, and remediation services industry were most likely to rate jobseekers as below average.

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1 It is important to note that the outcomes analysis cannot isolate the causal effect of Skills Wisconsin on any of the outcomes of interest because other factors besides the grant (such as general economic conditions or other changes to the workforce system) may also affect these outcomes.

2 For the survey, “workforce system” was defined broadly to include organizations such as the state’s system of Job Centers; local WDBs; state, local, and regional economic development organizations; and the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS).
Turning to general satisfaction with services received from the workforce system, Exhibit ES.2 shows that over three-quarters of employers (excluding those who said they had no interaction with the workforce system) reported being satisfied or very satisfied. Examining the results in relation to industry and employer size showed that:

- Employers in two industries were most likely to report being either satisfied or very satisfied. Among employers in the accommodation and food services industry, 88 percent fell into this group. Among employers in health care and social assistance, 87 percent did so.

- The smallest employers were more likely to report negative views. Among businesses with fewer than 50 employees, 28 percent of reported being either very dissatisfied or dissatisfied. This was about 10 percentage points higher than for mid-sized employers and about 6 percentage points higher than for large employers.
Finally, the survey results indicated that employers have mixed feelings about how well the workforce system is serving businesses in the state. As shown in Exhibit ES.3, about 45 percent said the workforce system does a good job; 15 percent had a more positive view and 41 percent had a more negative view.

Employer sentiment regarding this question also showed relationships with industry and size:

- Employers in the accommodation and food services industry gave the workforce system higher ratings than employers in other industries, with 23 percent saying the system does a very good job serving businesses.

- Employers in the health care and social assistance industry and the retail trade industry also gave the workforce system high ratings. About 17 percent of employers in the former industry said the workforce system is doing a very good job; 15 percent of employers in the latter industry said likewise.

- The proportion of employers reporting that the workforce system does a poor job serving businesses was highest in professional, scientific, and technical services (12
percent); construction (12 percent); retail trade (11 percent); and transportation and warehousing (10 percent).

- Compared to employers of other sizes, the smallest employers (i.e., those with fewer than 50 employees) were much more likely to say that the workforce system does a poor job serving businesses. Roughly 11 percent of small employers said so, compared to only 5 percent of other sized employers.

Exhibit ES.3: Employer Ratings of How Well the Workforce System Serves Businesses

Overall, the analyses presented in the Baseline Report provide a detailed description of how the different stakeholders in Wisconsin’s workforce system communicate with one another and how they work together to serve the state’s jobseekers and businesses. Further, they give a thorough account of how the state’s employers feel about their interactions with the workforce system and their opinions about how well the workforce system serves businesses. This baseline understanding of how Wisconsin’s workforce system operated prior to the implementation of Skills Wisconsin will serve as a benchmark from which to measure progress in key areas once grant operations have been completed.
1. INTRODUCTION

IMPAQ International, LLC was contracted by the Workforce Development Board (WDB) of South Central Wisconsin, the leader of a consortium of all WDBs in the state, to conduct an independent evaluation of the Skills Wisconsin program. Funded by the U.S. Department of Labor’s (DOL’s) Workforce Innovation Fund (WIF) program, Skills Wisconsin aims to improve communication among workforce development stakeholders throughout the state. The project’s premise is that to effectively serve not only jobseekers but also employers in the communities in which they operate, workforce development stakeholders must have a keen awareness of labor market conditions—including both employer needs and workforce skills. Recent developments in cloud-based computing applications provide workforce development stakeholders with an opportunity to move toward a more systematic, user-friendly, and integrated method of connecting the two sides of the labor market, by increasing coordination among the workforce development, economic development, and training communities. Accordingly, the Consortium will implement Salesforce, a cloud-based customer relationship management application, in each of the state’s 11 Workforce Development Areas (WDAs) during the grant period. Other program activities include training staff in a demand-driven model of workforce development and expanding industry partnerships. The Skills Wisconsin evaluation will include a quasi-experimental impact evaluation, a process study, and an outcomes analysis.

In this report, we present the results of the first year of the third-party evaluation of the Skills Wisconsin initiative. Evaluation activities to date have focused on gathering baseline information for the process study and the outcomes analysis. The remainder of this section gives an overview of the Skills Wisconsin initiative. Section 2 provides a detailed description of how the workforce system operated prior to the implementation of Skills Wisconsin, based on information gathered during a round of site visits to all 11 WDAs. Section 3 discusses employer attitudes and perceptions of the Wisconsin workforce system, as documented by responses to a mixed-mode survey of Wisconsin employers. Section 4 concludes the report.

1.1 The Skills Wisconsin Initiative

The State of Wisconsin is divided into 11 WDAs, each with its own Workforce Development Board (WDB). Exhibit 1 shows the counties that make up each WDA. In addition to the 11 WDAs, Wisconsin has more than 400 economic development entities and 16 technical colleges. The motivation for Skills Wisconsin was a sense among Consortium members that efficient coordination among these stakeholders has been difficult, due to both technical (lack of a centralized information system) and process (lack of a coherent system and set of processes for working with a given employer) challenges. The grant application further noted that the state’s workforce system has also faced wider challenges in relation to differences in workforce policy and goals among economic regions, which have been exacerbated by a lack of both knowledge and maintenance of working relationships with many partners, and sometimes even a sense of competition among partners for business customers.
In response to the DOL’s solicitation for grant applications under the WIF program, the WDB of South Central Wisconsin and Wisconsin’s 10 other WDBs formed a consortium to propose Skills Wisconsin as a new initiative to bring together Wisconsin’s WDBs, the Wisconsin Workforce Development Association (WWDA), the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS), the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD), and the non-profit Wisconsin Economic Development Association (WEDA) to reform the way jobseekers are attracted and matched to employment opportunities across the state, as well as to expand technical training opportunities.
Skills Wisconsin is intended to address three specific needs: 1) increase placement outcomes and move large numbers of jobseekers off the caseloads of the workforce development system to gainful employment leading to self-sufficiency (an immediate need); 2) better match training offerings with business hiring needs; and 3) improve the tracking of service delivery metrics and management of business customer information in real time to more effectively serve individual firms and industry cluster partnerships. To meet these needs, the Consortium will implement Salesforce, a cloud-based customer relationship management application, in each of the 11 Wisconsin WDAs during the grant period. The Salesforce platform is intended to improve communication among workforce development and economic development stakeholders throughout the state. Further, to complement the adoption of Salesforce, Skills Wisconsin will include the training of staff in a demand-driven model of workforce development, expanding industry partnerships, and other related activities.

1.2 Key Organizations in Wisconsin’s Workforce System

Skills Wisconsin aims to improve coordination and communication among a number of different organizations that together constitute the state’s workforce system. Key organizations in the state include the DWD, local Job Centers, area WDBs, WEDC, WTCS, and local/regional EDOs.

Department of Workforce Development (DWD). DWD is a state agency whose mission is to enhance the state’s workforce by providing support services, education, and training programs aimed at helping Wisconsin jobseekers find, secure, and retain good jobs. DWD comprises six divisions: 1) administrative services, 2) employment and training, 3) equal rights, 4) unemployment insurance, 5) vocational rehabilitation, and 6) worker’s compensation. The Employment and Training division focuses on delivering programs that assist both jobseekers and employers in filling job openings in the state. The Vocational Rehabilitation division serves people with disabilities and has also recently added 20 staff statewide to develop business relationships. DWD also maintains the Job Center of Wisconsin website, an online forum for both jobseekers and employers.

Job Centers. Wisconsin’s Job Centers are part of the nationwide network of American Job Centers, which connect employers and jobseekers in a local area and provide a range of services to both employers and jobseekers. There are currently 57 Job Centers in Wisconsin, distributed among the 11 WDAs. Job Centers have two groups of users: employers looking for workers to fill job openings, and jobseekers looking for employment. In addition to facilitating job matches between employers and jobseekers, Job Centers also serve as access points for information on career services, job fairs, and education and training programs. In many (but not all) Job Centers, representatives from other organizations such as the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, Wisconsin Works (W-2, a cash assistance program aimed at low-income families), and Veteran’s Services, are co-located at the Job Center, making it easier for individuals to find services that may be available to them. Many of the employment services (e.g., resume assistance, job search counseling) provided by Job Centers are administered by Wisconsin’s Job Service, part of the Employment and Training division of DWD.
**Workforce Development Boards (WDBs).** Each of Wisconsin’s 11 WDAs is governed by a WDB. One of the main functions of the WDBs is to administer the programs authorized by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998, including WIA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs as well as WIA Title III Employment Services. Beyond administering these programs, the WDBs play a key role in their local labor markets, working with both employers and training providers to implement other Federal, state, and local workforce investment programs. Examples of WDB activities include:

- Working with local colleges to ensure that relevant job training programs are available
- Organizing coalitions between businesses and colleges to create direct routes for students to obtain jobs upon completing their education programs
- Assisting businesses in obtaining state and Federal subsidies, grants, and waivers to encourage growth
- Prioritizing workforce development in sectors with high growth potential
- Researching best practices for training from other states and relevant organizations.

The 11 WDBs are also collectively represented by the WWDA. The WWDA acts on behalf of Wisconsin’s WDBs and provides a forum where representatives from WDAs around the state can communicate with one another about emerging challenges, labor market trends, legislative issues, and other topics. The WWDA gathers for an in-person meeting once each month.

**Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC).** WEDC is a public-private corporation that acts as the primary economic development organization in the state. Created in 2011, it is charged with the following objectives:³

- Developing and implementing economic programs to provide business support, expertise, and financial assistance to companies that are investing and creating jobs in Wisconsin
- Supporting new business start-ups and business expansion and growth in Wisconsin
- Developing and implementing any other programs related to economic development in Wisconsin.

WEDC works with employers in the state as well as businesses considering locating in Wisconsin, to encourage economic growth in the state. Toward that end, WEDC uses a variety of mechanisms that include:⁴

- Business retention and expansion grants and loans

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- Technology development loans
- Workforce training grants
- Tax credits for job creation and retention, capital investment, and employee training
- Early-stage business investment tax credits.

**Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS).** WTCS is a system of 16 institutions with roughly 50 campuses across the state that offer two-year associate degrees, technical diplomas, adult education programs, and customized training for local employers. The main goals for WTCS are to provide education and training programs that enhance the state’s workforce and to work with Wisconsin businesses in developing and implementing training programs tailored to their needs.\(^5\) In nearly all areas of the state, WTCS is the primary (or only) training provider involved with the workforce system.

**Local/Regional Economic Development Organizations (EDOs).** In addition to WEDC, which is a state-level organization focusing on economic development, a number of other local and regional organizations have similar missions. These smaller, more geographically focused groups typically undertake similar activities to those of WEDC and the BSRs at Job Centers, in that they work with local employers and recruit new employers to encourage economic activity in their communities. These organizations may run community loan programs for local businesses; they can also work to help connect jobseekers to available positions. Many local EDOs often play other roles as well, however, including advising local governments on how to make their jurisdiction more attractive to business, or engaging in community development, such as through urban renewal and infrastructure development projects. Examples of these types of organizations include:

- Over 50 county economic development corporations
- Nine regional economic development groups, including: the 7 Rivers Alliance, Centergy, Grow North, Milwaukee 7, Momentum West, New North, the Northwest Regional Planning Commission, Prosperity Southwest, and Thrive.

### 1.3 Characteristics of Wisconsin’s WDAs

*Skills Wisconsin* is being implemented statewide among multiple workforce system stakeholders. The key organizations involved in implementing the grant, as noted, are the state’s 11 WDBs. As part of the grant, all of the WDBs are adopting the Salesforce platform to manage their client relationships. Further, the WDBs are emphasizing process improvements to enhance the ways they serve their business customers.

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There is significant variation across WDAs in terms of important characteristics of their respective labor markets (see Exhibit 2). Among the 11 WDAs, three have much larger populations than the others. In 2011, the Milwaukee, South Central, and Bay Area WDAs each had a total population of over 800,000 and each features one of the state’s three largest cities (Milwaukee, Madison, and Green Bay, respectively). The western part of the state is much more rural. The Northwest, Western, and Southwest WDAs have the lowest populations among WDAs—despite covering a large geographic area, for example, the population of the Northwest WDA is less than 180,000. In general, average earnings tracks with WDA size; workers in larger WDAs (as measured by population) have higher average earnings than smaller WDAs. The ratio of number of unemployed workers to total population is relatively consistent at around 4 percent across the state, with the smallest in South Central at 3.6 percent and Waukesha-Ozaukee-Washington (W-O-W) at 3.8 percent, and the highest in Northwest at 5 percent.

Employment by industry varies to a degree across WDAs. Jobs in agriculture are more prevalent in the western part of the state, accounting for 6-8 percent of jobs in these WDAs compared to 4 percent or less in other areas. Manufacturing was most prominent in Fox Valley, Bay Area, and W-O-W, accounting for 17-20 percent of jobs. Among the industries listed in Exhibit 2, jobs in the health care and social assistance industry were significant in Milwaukee (16 percent of all employment) and jobs in government were significant in South Central (17 percent of all employment), which includes the state capital, Madison.

In terms of the labor force, educational attainment was highest in W-O-W and South Central. In these two WDAs, over 20 percent of the population has a bachelor’s degree and less than 30 percent has only a high school diploma. Among the remaining WDAs, between 30 and 40 percent of the population has a high school diploma and less than 20 percent has a bachelor’s degree. The age profiles of the workforce are similar across WDAs, with younger workers (20-39) representing about 25-35 percent of the population and older workers (40-59) representing about 30 percent. The highest concentrations of younger workers are in Milwaukee (30 percent) and South Central (29 percent), which is where the University of Wisconsin-Madison is located.

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6 Unless otherwise noted, all figures reported in this section are for 2011, based on U.S. Census Bureau data.
7 Unemployment data are for February 2011 and are taken from the Local Area Unemployment Statistics series produced by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.
### Exhibit 2: Characteristics of WDAs

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Demographics and Employment</th>
<th>Southeast</th>
<th>Milwaukee</th>
<th>W-O-W</th>
<th>Bay Area</th>
<th>North Central</th>
<th>Northwest</th>
<th>West Central</th>
<th>Western</th>
<th>South Central</th>
<th>Southwest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>467,749</td>
<td>952,957</td>
<td>613,652</td>
<td>416,700</td>
<td>805,396</td>
<td>416,237</td>
<td>178,514</td>
<td>467,873</td>
<td>297,931</td>
<td>805,557</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jobs</td>
<td>213,163</td>
<td>574,128</td>
<td>389,269</td>
<td>227,481</td>
<td>498,762</td>
<td>250,142</td>
<td>96,069</td>
<td>249,838</td>
<td>184,643</td>
<td>550,628</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average Earnings</td>
<td>$41,147</td>
<td>$51,428</td>
<td>$48,346</td>
<td>$42,218</td>
<td>$42,079</td>
<td>$39,127</td>
<td>$31,559</td>
<td>$35,163</td>
<td>$37,578</td>
<td>$45,188</td>
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<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>21,468</td>
<td>40,297</td>
<td>23,409</td>
<td>16,826</td>
<td>35,230</td>
<td>20,399</td>
<td>8,967</td>
<td>19,685</td>
<td>11,814</td>
<td>28,990</td>
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<td>Unemployment per capita</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
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<td>Completions</td>
<td>5,702</td>
<td>17,516</td>
<td>4,605</td>
<td>4,957</td>
<td>10,125</td>
<td>5,340</td>
<td>2,590</td>
<td>6,820</td>
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<th>Local Characteristics</th>
<th>Southeast</th>
<th>Milwaukee</th>
<th>W-O-W</th>
<th>Bay Area</th>
<th>North Central</th>
<th>Northwest</th>
<th>West Central</th>
<th>Western</th>
<th>South Central</th>
<th>Southwest</th>
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<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>20%</td>
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<td>13%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Trade</td>
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<td>8%</td>
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<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care and Social Assistance</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<td>11%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>17%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent of Jobs in Key Industries</th>
<th>Southeast</th>
<th>Milwaukee</th>
<th>W-O-W</th>
<th>Bay Area</th>
<th>North Central</th>
<th>Northwest</th>
<th>West Central</th>
<th>Western</th>
<th>South Central</th>
<th>Southwest</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Health Care and Social Assistance</td>
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<td>16%</td>
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<td>11%</td>
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<th>W-O-W</th>
<th>Bay Area</th>
<th>North Central</th>
<th>Northwest</th>
<th>West Central</th>
<th>Western</th>
<th>South Central</th>
<th>Southwest</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School Diploma</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>29%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
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<td>18%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Profile</th>
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<th>W-O-W</th>
<th>Bay Area</th>
<th>North Central</th>
<th>Northwest</th>
<th>West Central</th>
<th>Western</th>
<th>South Central</th>
<th>Southwest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20 to 39 Years</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 to 59 Years</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WIA Funding</th>
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<th>Milwaukee</th>
<th>W-O-W</th>
<th>Bay Area</th>
<th>North Central</th>
<th>Northwest</th>
<th>West Central</th>
<th>Western</th>
<th>South Central</th>
<th>Southwest</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WIA Funding (total)</td>
<td>$3,101,772</td>
<td>$8,528,048</td>
<td>$2,020,857</td>
<td>$3,134,845</td>
<td>$3,822,451</td>
<td>$2,895,532</td>
<td>$2,083,614</td>
<td>$2,362,827</td>
<td>$1,384,692</td>
<td>$3,665,337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WIA Funding (per capita)</td>
<td>$6.63</td>
<td>$8.95</td>
<td>$3.29</td>
<td>$7.52</td>
<td>$4.75</td>
<td>$6.96</td>
<td>$11.67</td>
<td>$5.05</td>
<td>$4.65</td>
<td>$4.55</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WTCS Campuses</th>
<th>WTCS Campuses</th>
<th>Southeast</th>
<th>Milwaukee</th>
<th>W-O-W</th>
<th>Bay Area</th>
<th>North Central</th>
<th>Northwest</th>
<th>West Central</th>
<th>Western</th>
<th>South Central</th>
<th>Southwest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** Data on local characteristics for each WDA represent 2011 figures and are taken from EMSI reports, which use data from multiple sources including the U.S. Census Bureau, the U.S. Department of Education, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Data on WIA funding represents Program Year (PY) 2011 and includes only funding allocated to local areas; figures are from WWDA’s PY 2011 Funding Flow chart. Data on the number of WTCS campuses are based on our own calculations because the 16 WTCS college areas do not coincide with the 11 WDAs.
The last three rows of the exhibit provide information about the workforce system in each WDA. Two of them show the total and per capita WIA funding, respectively, allocated to each WDA to support the WIA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs.\(^8\) Per capita WIA funding is fairly consistent across WDAs, with most receiving about $5-$7 per person. Northwest, receives the highest amount per capita at $11.67, roughly double the amount received by most other WDAs.\(^9\) Milwaukee receives the next highest level of per-capita funding at about $9. In comparison, W-O-W receives the least WIA funding per capita—only $3.29. The last row of the table shows the number of WTCS campuses in each WDA, which ranges from only two in Fox Valley to eight in North Central.\(^{10}\)

\(^8\) The figures in the exhibit report WIA funding per capita based on the total population of each WDA. This is not the same as the amount of funding per jobseeker served, as obviously the program targets a small fraction of individuals in each WDA. Nevertheless, the figures in the exhibit still provide a useful way to normalize the raw dollar amounts. Funding amounts are from WWDA’s Program Year 2011 Funding Flow chart.

\(^9\) Northwest is one of three remaining Concentrated Employment Program areas in the country, which accounts for its relatively high per-capita funding.

\(^{10}\) Based on our own calculations; the 16 WTCS college areas do not coincide with the 11 WDAs.
2. HOW DOES THE WORKFORCE SYSTEM OPERATE NOW?

The main focus of the evaluation during the first year of *Skills Wisconsin*, as noted, has been to gather information to support the process study and outcomes analysis components of the evaluation. Toward that end, evaluation activities to date have centered on understanding how Wisconsin’s workforce system operated before program implementation. Once the grant is finished, we will gather similar information after the implementation of the *Skills Wisconsin* program. Comparing the data we gather at the end of the grant to the data gathered before implementation will thus allow us to observe whether and how the workforce system changed as *Skills Wisconsin* was implemented. In this section, we describe our approach to documenting the Wisconsin workforce system as it operated prior to *Skills Wisconsin* and present our main findings, organized by major research question.

### 2.1 Approach

Based on the objectives of the *Skills Wisconsin* program, the process study component of the evaluation is focused on identifying how the program ultimately affects the answers to three main research questions:

- How do workforce development professionals and stakeholders communicate and share information?
- How do workforce development professionals communicate employer skill needs to the training community?
- How do workforce development professionals and stakeholders ensure that the training received by job seekers will meet employer needs?

To answer these questions for the pre-program workforce system, IMPAQ used a two-pronged approach. First, we gathered qualitative information from key workforce system stakeholders through semi-structured in-person interviews conducted during site visits to all 11 WDAs. In addition to these interviews, each site visit featured a focus group with a small number of jobseekers. We then analyzed the interview and focus group data to identify common themes and patterns among responses. Second, we gathered quantitative information on communication patterns using a social network analysis (SNA) questionnaire. We used the data from the questionnaire to constructed diagrams of the communication network of each WDA and of the state as a whole. For both individual WDAs and the state we also calculated quantitative measures of network activity. Below, we describe our methods for conducting the site visits and carrying out the SNA. We then present our findings.

#### 2.1.1 Site Visit Methodology

IMPAQ’s process for conducting site visits has been developed and honed over multiple projects involving process studies. This process has three steps: 1) preparation, 2) conducting
the site visits, and 3) analyzing the data. Below, we describe how we carried out each step for the Skills Wisconsin site visits.

**Step 1: Preparation.** A site visit protocol is a detailed list of questions and topics to explore during the site visit. It organizes the data needed for the process study in a logical way and maps each topic or question to specific individuals in the site, according to their job or role in the project. The purpose of the site visit protocol is to standardize the gathering of data for the process study across all sites in the project and to ensure a high level of quality in that data gathering process. To gain the insights needed for the development of comprehensive site visit protocols, IMPAQ staff reviewed relevant materials for each WDA, including the WDA’s WIA local plan, the WDA website (if available), and other documents relevant for understanding the WDA’s institutional structure and context. Following the materials review, IMPAQ developed the site visit protocol, paying specific attention to the process study research questions.

Following preparation of the site visit protocols, the IMPAQ staff assigned two-person teams to conduct the site visits. Each team—which included 1) an experienced researcher responsible for collecting all site visit data from the team’s assigned WDA and 2) another staff person to assist with note-taking during interviews and other tasks—was assigned a WDA. A training session was held with all site visit staff to review the purpose of the visits, go over the site visit protocol, and answer any questions. During the training, site visitors were instructed on how to properly conduct a site visit (for example, how to avoid expressing either positive or negative opinions about operations in the WDA during their visit). Similarly, they were instructed not to discuss information gathered in one interview with individuals in another interview.

Shortly after the training, the site visit teams made contact with key staff in their assigned WDAs to begin making preparations for the site visit. This involved first contacting the leadership of each WDA via an introductory email and then organizing telephone calls to discuss and coordinate the site visits. After this initial contact, IMPAQ staff worked with WDA staff to develop a visit itinerary (see Exhibit 3 for a sample itinerary). Because not all stakeholders shown in the exhibit were appropriate for all WDAs, the site visit teams worked with their WDA liaisons to finalize the itinerary with appropriate personnel. The dates for each site visit were finalized based on availability of the WDA interviewees. Shortly before each site visit, IMPAQ staff forwarded an electronic copy of the SNA questionnaire (described in Section 2.1.2 below), with instructions that they were to be completed by each interview respondent. Lastly, each site visit team worked with its assigned WDA to make arrangements for the focus group of jobseekers.
Exhibit 3: Sample Site Visit Itinerary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Meeting Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Workforce Development Board (WDB) Executive Director</td>
<td>9:00AM – 10:30AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other WDB Representative (Board Chairs, Operations Manager)</td>
<td>10:30AM – 11:30AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) Representative</td>
<td>11:30AM – 12:15PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>12:15PM – 1:15PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job Center Manager</td>
<td>1:15PM – 2:15PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job Center Case Manager</td>
<td>2:15PM – 3:00PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job Center Business Services Representative</td>
<td>3:00PM – 3:45PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other Job Center Partners</td>
<td>3:45PM – 4:45PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus Group (8-10 participants)</td>
<td>7:00 – 8:00PM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Meeting Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regional Business Services Team Representative</td>
<td>9:00AM – 10:00AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local Economic Development Agency Representative</td>
<td>10:00 AM – 11:00AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regional Economic Development Organization Representative</td>
<td>11:00AM – 12:00PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Noon – 1:00PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local Employer(s)</td>
<td>1:00PM – 2:00PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WTCS Representative</td>
<td>2:00PM – 3:00PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other Local Training Providers (if applicable)</td>
<td>3:00PM – 3:45PM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Step 2: Conducting the Site Visits.** The first round of site visits included one visit to each of the 11 WDAs in the state. IMPAQ conducted a pilot site visit to the W-O-W WDA in early October 2012. The purpose of this first visit was not only to gather data from W-O-W but also to identify any necessary refinements to the site visit protocol. Only slight modifications were made to the protocol after the W-O-W visit. Nine of the ten remaining site visits were conducted in November 2012. Scheduling issues forced the final site visit to the Milwaukee WDA to be conducted in January 2013.

As indicated in the sample itinerary, each site visit consisted of two days of in-person interviews. The first day included interviews with key WDB staff and leadership. A jobseeker focus group was typically held in the evening of the first day. The focus group consisted of a structured discussion with 8-10 jobseekers regarding their experiences receiving services from the workforce system. The focus group discussion centered on topics including:

- How jobseekers initially came into contact with the Job Center
- The types of services received (e.g., resume preparation, job search, career counseling, education/training)
- The service delivery processes
- Experiences in training programs and subsequent job search experiences
- Overall satisfaction.
The remaining stakeholders (e.g., employers, representatives from local EDOs) were interviewed on the second day.

To conduct all interviews, meeting space was arranged by each WDA, such as a conference room at the local Job Center. We blocked 30-45 minutes for each interview, except for interviews with key staff (such as the WDB Director), which were allocated more time. In the event that a person scheduled for an interview was unavailable during the visit, arrangements were made to conduct the interview at a later date over the telephone.

At each site, the researchers used the site visit protocols to guide the interviews and subsequent discussions. With permission of the meeting participants, the interviews and focus group discussions were recorded using a portable audio recorder, for later reference.

**Step 3: Analyzing the Data.** The last step of the site visits was to analyze the data. Upon returning to IMPAQ headquarters, the note taker was responsible for transcribing all interview notes into electronic format as quickly as possible to minimize recall error. Both members of each site visit team reviewed the notes for accuracy and submitted a cleaned set of notes to the site visit coordinator, who was responsible for analyzing the data. If the review of interview notes revealed any gaps in knowledge or suggested that additional questions were warranted or needed clarification, the site visit team followed-up with the relevant WDA contact.

To facilitate comparison across sites, we developed a standardized template for the site visit notes. The template contained the following sections: 1) background information about the WDA, 2) communication among key stakeholders, 3) how employer skill needs are identified, 4) how employer skill needs are communicated to training providers, and 5) productivity. In the second round of site visits, additional sections will focus on identifying best practices and lessons learned that were revealed during Skills Wisconsin implementation.

Once the raw interview data from all 11 site visits had been consolidated, the information was analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques. This process involved reviewing responses to the questions categorized into each of the template sections and identifying patterns, themes, and outliers among the responses. Question responses were analyzed as a whole, as well as by WDA and respondent group. This approach allowed the reviewers to identify patterns and themes across the state, within each WDA, and within respondent groups. Following this review process, a summary of the responses to each question was prepared highlighting the themes, patterns, and outliers identified. A similar process was used to review the question response summaries and summarize the findings for each of the template sections.

The main findings of our analysis of the interview data are presented in the next section. Because the first round of site visits is intended to establish a baseline understanding of Wisconsin’s workforce system prior to the implementation of Skills Wisconsin, our main results are not geared toward developing particular recommendations at this early stage. Rather, they
document what we learned about how Wisconsin’s workforce system operated at the outset of the Skills Wisconsin grant.

2.1.2 Social Network Analysis (SNA) Methodology

As part of the process study, IMPAQ conducted an SNA of the communication networks in each of the 11 WDAs and across the entire state. In an SNA, stakeholders are represented by nodes on a network map and relationships among them by connections between the nodes (see Exhibit 4).

![Exhibit 4: A Network Map](image)

A network map provides visual insights into such important questions as: 1) who communicates with whom, 2) what is the frequency of communication between each pair of stakeholders, and 3) what groups of stakeholders, if any, mostly communicate among themselves? In addition to the visual information conveyed by the network map, we assessed relevant quantitative measures of network activity as another way to characterize communications among workforce development agencies, economic development agencies, employers, education/training partners, and other Wisconsin stakeholders. To support the SNA, IMPAQ developed a social network questionnaire, which was administered to all participants in our first site visit round. Conducting the SNA involved two steps: 1) developing and administering the questionnaire and 2) preparing and analyzing the data.

**Step 1: Developing and Administering the Social Network Questionnaires.** The purpose of the social network questionnaire is to gather information on communication among stakeholders in the workforce system. To create the questionnaire, we began by making a standardized list of staff positions, which included positions across the different workforce system organizations. We then crafted a series of questions asking respondents to characterize their communications with the person/people in the list. In particular, we asked respondents to tell us how often they receive information from these individuals, as well as how valuable they consider that information. Respondents were asked to answer the questions regarding their communications both *within* and *outside* their home WDA. The questionnaire itself featured instructions for how to fill out and submit it to the research team. Respondents were also asked to identify, from the list, the position that most closely matched their own job.
Prior to each site visit, IMPAQ site visitors provided electronic copies of the SNA questionnaire to all site visit liaisons and requested that it be distributed to all personnel interviewed as part of the site visit. When the research team conducted the in-person interviews, any respondent unable to provide the team with a completed questionnaire was given a hard copy and asked to complete and return it following the interview. After returning from the field, IMPAQ site visitors labeled each completed questionnaire with the appropriate WDA number before and submitting it for analysis.

**Step 2: Preparing and Analyzing the Data.** After gathering all completed questionnaires, the next step was to prepare and analyze the data. The raw data were first entered into separate spreadsheets for each WDA, with each spreadsheet containing a separate worksheet for each question (e.g., frequency, value). A matrix on each worksheet included the full list of stakeholder positions both across the top row and down the first column. For each row, the data provided by that respondent regarding communication with each of the positions was recorded in the appropriate column. For example, if the WDB Director reported that s/he frequently received information from the Job Center Manager (i.e., a value of 3 on a scale of 0-3), for the row corresponding to WDB Director we entered 3 in the column corresponding to Job Center Manager. The end result of this process was a series of matrices representing all data gathered from the SNA questionnaires.

Once all the data had been entered into the WDA spreadsheets, we used an SNA software tool called UCINET to create social network maps for each WDA showing who in the network communicates with whom, and how often. Each map shows the various respondents as nodes on the map, with different node shapes representing different job titles. The nodes on the map are connected by lines that show the flow of information in the network. The lines can have arrows on one end or on both ends; the arrows denote the direction of the information. For example, if Harry, the WEDC BSR in WDA 1, reports frequent communication with Sally, the Job Center Manager in WDA 1, but Sally does not likewise report receiving information from Harry, then the line connecting the two will have an arrow pointing from Harry to Sally, but not the reverse. In SNA terminology, lines with arrows toward a node capture in-degree, and lines with arrows away from a node show out-degree. In addition to the arrows, the thickness of each line conveys information about the frequency of the reported communication between two nodes. Thicker lines represent more frequent communication.

After creating a network map for each WDA, we combined all the data into a single matrix that we used to generate a statewide map. Because one of the objectives of Skills Wisconsin is to better integrate the workforce system across the state, the statewide map is of greater interest than the individual WDA maps. The statewide map allows us to see the extent to which the

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11 These maps can be created to show many different aspects of the underlying data. In this report, we focus on maps representing the frequency of communication among stakeholders.

12 Technically, the in-degree for a single node is a measure of the number of connections pointing to that node; the out-degree is similarly a measure of the number of connections pointing out of the node.
workforce system is integrated among WDAs. Understanding baseline communication patterns at the state level will, thus, give us the opportunity to observe whether and how these patterns have changed following grant implementation.

Beyond creating network maps, SNA typically involves calculating quantitative measures of network activity. The same data used to create the maps are used to construct the network measures. These quantitative measures can highlight certain properties of a network, such as the degree to which communication is highly reliant on a small number of well-connected nodes. As a way to augment our analysis, we computed three primary social network measures, both for each WDA and for the state as a whole, using UCINET:

- **In-degree centralization**—a measure of how concentrated the network is in terms of the connections to nodes in the network. In other words, is all of the information flowing to a single person?

- **Out-degree centralization**—a measure of how concentrated the network is in terms of the connections from nodes in the network. In other words, is all of the information flowing from a single person?

- **Betweenness centralization**—a measure of how concentrated the network is in terms of a single node acting as a go-between for other nodes in the network. In other words, how common is it for the only connection between two people in the network to go through a third-party?

Each of the three measures is expressed as a percentage of the maximum value the measure could possibly take for the network based only on the number of nodes in the network. For example, an in-degree centralization equal to 25 means that many of the nodes in the network are receiving information (a value of 100 percent would imply that only one node receives information). To clarify how to interpret the measures, Exhibit 5 illustrates two centralization extremes—a star network that is completely centralized and a circle network that is completely diffuse.

**Exhibit 5: Network Centralization Examples**
2.2 Communication among Workforce System Stakeholders

Both the in-person site visits and the SNA gathered information on communication patterns within Wisconsin’s workforce development system. Below, we describe the results of our analyses separately for each data source.

2.2.1 Site Visit Findings

In interviewing workforce system staff about how they communicate with others in the workforce system, the questions focused on four aspects: 1) mode, 2) frequency, 3) characterization, and 4) value.

Mode. Part of the interview discussion guide asked about the different ways the interviewee communicated with others, such as through email, telephone calls, and in-person meetings. Interviewees reported using a broad range of communication modes to share information with other workforce development stakeholders. Email was typically reported as the primary mode of communication, but the specific mode used appears to be dependent on the type of information shared, which organizations are communicating, and the relationships among those organizations. For example, meetings were more commonly reported among more senior level staff and are used as a venue for high level decision making; email and phone were reported more frequently by “on the ground” type staff for sharing case-specific information. Many respondent groups have standing meetings (e.g., WDB meetings, Regional Business Services Manager meetings) that allow the sharing of best practices and lessons learned, while email/phone allows the sharing of project-specific information, communication about ad-hoc issues, and responding to information requests.

Communications with employers were one exception to this pattern. Employers who are members of the WDB, the boards of EDOs, or training provider advisory committees provide input during meetings in order to inform high level decisions in workforce development. Moreover, individual meetings with employers to discuss their specific needs were also reported by respondents. These types of meetings include on-site tours of workplaces and one-on-one meetings with company CEOs or Human Resources (HR) representatives. Industry listening sessions and industry alliance meetings were also reported as a means of communication with employers—allowing employers to voice their needs at an industry level. Some respondents also reported collecting information from employers via employer surveys.

Frequency. The interviews asked staff about how often they communicated with others in the workforce system. The workforce system stakeholders we spoke to reported a wide range of communications frequency both within and across stakeholder types. WDB and Job Center staff reported the most regular communications with both their counterparts in other WDAs as well as other stakeholders in their own WDA. This is likely because these personnel, especially WDB representatives, are involved in many standing meetings that include representatives from many different types of stakeholder organizations. Also, BSRs reported very frequent—in some cases even hourly—communications with employers. Although most EDOs reported very
frequent (usually daily) communications with employers, the employers we interviewed did not report similarly frequent communications with representatives from those organizations. This inconsistency is likely due to the fact that small number of EDO staff is small relative to the number of employers in the state. As a result, most employers would be unlikely to have frequent contact with EDOs.\(^\text{13}\)

**Characterization.** In addition to providing information about how and how often they communicated with other people in the workforce system, we asked interviewees to tell us what they thought about the level of communication. Most respondents reported that their communication with other workforce system organizations is reciprocal, meaning that information flows in both directions. Respondents generally told us that the level of communication is adequate, but most believed there is still room for improvement, especially in communications with employers. For example, one respondent indicated that s/he felt that employers are often left of “out of the loop” when it comes to workforce system operations. The people we interviewed also reported that although some information is provided to them automatically by other stakeholders—examples include training schedules and organization newsletters—most of the time they have to request the information they need.

**Value.** We asked interviewees about how valuable they considered the information they receive from others in the workforce system. Broadly speaking, all respondents reported that they consider their communication with other workforce development organizations to be valuable. Most of the individuals we spoke with reported that the information they get from other stakeholders helps them better serve their customers—both jobseekers and employers.

### 2.2.2 Social Network Analysis Findings

Exhibit 6 shows the statewide network map, which provides a visual representation of all communications reported to us in the social network questionnaires. Each node represents an individual in the network (e.g., WDB Director, Job Center Manager, WTCS Representative, employer). As shown in the two legends accompanying the map, the shape of the node indicates the position title for the respondent and different colors represent different WDAs.

Many individuals receive information from a large number of others in the network. These are the nodes that are nearly surrounded by the points of incoming arrows. Many of these nodes represent personnel that we might expect to be the recipients of a large volume of information—WDB Directors and Job Center managers. But other nodes are around the edges of the picture, showing that they are more isolated in the sense that they have fewer connections to others in the system.

\(^{13}\) Section 3 presents more detailed information regarding employer experiences with the workforce system, based on data from a statewide survey of employers.
Exhibit 6: Statewide Network Map
As shown, communication patterns among workforce system stakeholders in the state are complex. Although the scope of the network may make it difficult to interpret what the picture can tell us, when we combine the quantitative measures of network centrality with the image, interesting results emerge. Exhibit 7 summarizes the network centrality measures, both for the state overall and separately for each WDA. Recall that the three measures are in-degree (which indicates the extent to which information flows only to a single person or few people), out-degree (which measures the extent to which information flows only from a single person or a few people), and betweenness (which measures the extent to which connections between two people in the network are only through a third person).

### Exhibit 7: Network Centralization Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>In-Degree</th>
<th>Out-Degree</th>
<th>Betweenness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statewide</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WDA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W-O-W</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fox Valley</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bay Area</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Central</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>43.2</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Central</td>
<td>57.7</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Central</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Social network questionnaire data. Note: Social network questionnaires were not received from Milwaukee.

To interpret the figures in the exhibit, recall that each of the three network centralization measures is scaled to a range of 0-100, with higher numbers representing more centralized networks. At the state level, all three measures indicate that the communication network is not very centralized. The in-degree measure of 23.7 means that the arrows pointing to nodes on the map are not focused on a small number of people. In other words, the information being transmitted within the workforce system is being distributed throughout the system, rather than going to a single person or to a small number of people. The out-degree measure is even lower, meaning that the arrows pointing away from nodes on the map are also spread out—a lot of people provide information to others, rather than all information coming from a single source or only a few sources. Finally, the betweenness measure is similar in magnitude to the in- and out-degree measures. A value of 10.5 is very low, meaning that it is rare for two people in the network to communicate with each other only indirectly through a third person. In broad terms, the low degree of centralization in the statewide network suggests that communications within the workforce system include most stakeholders and exhibit low potential for
information bottlenecks. Once we collect similar data near the end of the grant period, we will be able to observe how the network has changed following the implementation of Skills Wisconsin.

In addition to the statewide measures, Exhibit 7 shows the three network centralization measures for each WDA. In general, both the in-degree and out-degree values are higher within an individual WDA than for the statewide network. Among WDAs, in-degree values range from 29.9 in Bay Area to 57.7 in West Central; out-degree values range from 18.8 in West Central to 43.6 in South Central. Intuitively, the differences between the state-level measures and the WDA-level measures make sense. Within a single WDA, we might expect communication to be more highly concentrated among the central actors (such as the local WDB Director), whereas there is no state-level equivalent to them. Betweenness values among WDAs are lower than for the statewide network. This also makes intuitive sense. Although Exhibit 7 shows that many staff communicate with personnel outside their own WDA, at the state level an individual is more likely to serve as a go-between for others. As a hypothetical example, staff in both North Central and Southeast might communicate with staff in South Central (with which each WDA shares a border), but not with each other.

**Limitations.** Three caveats regarding the interpretation of the SNA are worth noting. First, the networks represented in our analyses do not include all relevant individuals in Wisconsin’s workforce system. Rather, the data we gathered were limited only to information obtained from those individuals we had contact with during our site visits and who completed our questionnaire. This necessarily excludes a number of personnel who contribute to the overall flow of information in the state’s workforce system. However, we are confident that our data collection process struck a reasonable balance between soliciting information either from so many people as to make the entire process onerous or from too few people to allow for meaningful analysis. Second, the data are self-reported. To the extent that respondents misreported their actual communication patterns, our results will be biased. Lastly, during the data preparation process a number of decisions were made regarding how to handle various problems we encountered (e.g., how to classify some respondents’ positions, how to handle write-in data, what to do if there were multiple respondents for the same position). In each case, we used our best judgment about how to proceed. All together, these SNA limitations suggest that our results are best interpreted as a good, quantitative, and rigorous approximation to the true underlying communication patterns among workforce system stakeholders, not necessarily an exhaustive, precise documentation of the same.

**2.3 Identifying the Workforce Skills Employers Want in Jobseekers**

In addition to documenting patterns of communication among workforce system stakeholders, a second objective of the process study is to evaluate how Skills Wisconsin affects how the workforce system identifies the skills that are in demand among employers. To identify the processes and approaches being used before program implementation, the first round site visit protocols included a section about this topic, with questions about each organization’s role in the process of identifying employer skill needs, how the respondent works to identify employer
skill needs, and with whom they share the information they receive on employer skill needs. This section presents a summary of the approaches used for identifying the employer skill needs, the tools used to manage this information, and how workforce development stakeholders share the information they receive.

2.3.1 Processes for Identifying Employer Skill Needs

Overall, most respondents reported using some type of non-automated method for identifying and tracking what employers are looking for in jobseekers. Examples include one-on-one meetings with individual employers, meetings with groups of employers, cold calls to employers, and employer surveys. While these manual techniques may be productive, workforce system stakeholders do not appear to have systematic methods for tracking efforts to identify employer skill needs.

One-On-One Meetings. The vast majority of respondents reported that identifying employer skill needs is conducted primarily through direct contact with employers. Respondents reported touring facilities and working closely with employers to get an accurate understanding of what employers are looking for in jobseekers. These interactions also sometimes serve a second purpose of clarifying employer expectations about what sort of skills are realistic to expect from jobseekers referred by the workforce system. For example, one respondent indicated that s/he has encountered employers that present “wish lists” of jobseeker qualities, which include significantly advanced skills unlikely to be immediately available in the workforce. Other key findings include:

- Most WDB and Job Center staff reported that the business services team and/or the employer relations team members work directly with employers to identify their skill needs. BSRs confirmed this, noting that their main role is to work directly with employers and then to share the information they receive with their colleagues in the workforce system. BSRs reported very frequent communication with employers, sometimes even hourly.

- Individual meetings with employers were also reported by training providers and EDOs, though there was some variation across respondents and across WDAs in how these groups work directly with employers. For example, some ED respondents reported that their role is to ensure an effective link between employers and technical colleges, mostly facilitating communication between the two. Other ED respondents viewed their role as being responsible for coordinating all efforts among workforce stakeholders that are aimed at closing the gap between the skills of the workforce and the skills employers want in jobseekers. Still others reported their role to be something between these two extremes.

- Training providers generally reported receiving information on employer skill needs from the full range of workforce system stakeholders. As a result, they reported less reliance on one-on-one meetings with employers, though some training providers reported developing training programs specifically for particular employers.
One Job Center manager told us that the process of one-on-one interaction with employers is very challenging. Relying on such personal interaction requires a great deal of “back and forth” with individual employers to gain a clear understanding of their needs and to help employers determine realistic requirements for their job openings.

Another challenge with the one-on-one approach is that it can create an environment in which stakeholders become protective of information they receive. Regarding the last point, some information that employers share with BSRs and other workforce stakeholders is often considered confidential (e.g., an anticipated plant closing, an expected expansion). Though there are good reasons for keeping sensitive information from becoming public knowledge, failing to communicate this type of knowledge with other stakeholders in the workforce system can limit the system’s effectiveness. As an example, one interviewee voiced frustration over being left in the dark over an upcoming employer expansion. The employer needed people to fill a large number of jobs, but with extremely short notice. Had the expansion been communicated earlier, the person we spoke to told us that the system could have helped train enough workers to meet the employer’s needs. As it was, this person’s organization was left scrambling to find people.

Meetings with Groups of Employers. Beyond one-on-one meetings, respondents reported hearing from groups of employers within industries and/or geographic areas via listening sessions, forums, and other types of employer groups. These gatherings help to identify current and future trends in employer skill needs that are common across multiple employers.

Many of the people we interviewed noted that that there are industry partnerships within their own WDA as well as across regions of the state that include their WDA. Industry partnerships were reported in the manufacturing, marine manufacturing, health care, agriculture, biotechnology, and machining industries. These partnerships involve workforce system stakeholders in identifying the most in-demand occupations and skills to effectively match job training programs to employer needs. For example, respondents from one WDA reported that the manufacturing alliance for their region has been successful in getting the area’s educators to work with local area manufacturing leaders to identify employer skill needs and implement training programs to prepare a workforce with the required skills.

A few respondents from ED organizations reported working with industry partnerships. Those who did reported finding the information they receive from the partnerships to be valuable. They also said they share information from these partnerships with other workforce stakeholders as appropriate.

Few respondents reported plans to expand existing industry partnerships or develop new ones. One person reported that there is potential for these types of partnerships in the insurance and transportation industries. Another noted that for industry partnerships to be successful there must be both willingness and a need for collaboration among employers. One example of this is
the health care industry, which faces rapid changes in both technology and policy. These forces combine to create a consistent need for new training programs.

In addition to industry partnerships, training providers reported working with employers to identify their skill needs through training program advisory committees. Training provider advisory groups typically have regular meetings where skill sets and competencies are discussed in terms of specific training/education programs. In a similar vein, some training provider and WDB respondents reported holding regular summits/listening sessions where groups of employers come to talk about their needs, changes in their industry, and their level of satisfaction with training program graduates.

**Additional Methods.** The workforce system professionals we interviewed also described a handful of other ways they identify what employers are looking for in the workforce. Employer surveys and cold calls were reported as one additional means for identifying upcoming skill needs and positions employers are struggling to fill. One BSR reported participating in a study of incumbent worker skill gaps that helped identify five important skill areas. A number of WDB and Job Center staff also mentioned employer job orders and labor market information data as a source for this type of information.

In addition to learning about employer skill needs directly from employers, respondents also reported learning about employer skill needs from other workforce system stakeholders, both within their own WDA and in others. How this information is conveyed among workforce system staff depends greatly on the structure of the WDAs and the relationships between the different stakeholder organizations. In general, respondents reported that there is no systematic method for sharing information on employer skill needs across WDAs.

### 2.3.2 Tracking and Management Tools

Different workforce stakeholders may use different tools for tracking and managing their interactions with employers. Across all respondent groups, the people we spoke to generally reported using very basic tools for tracking employer contacts and the information collected from employers. The most prominent among these are Microsoft Outlook and Microsoft Excel. For example, it is not uncommon for single individuals to maintain their own desktop spreadsheet for keeping track of their personal interactions with employers. Perhaps not surprisingly, many interviewees noted their opinion that the process and tools used to track employer contacts and information need improvement.

A number of respondents did report using customer relationship management (CRM) tools similar to Salesforce for managing employer contacts. In fact, all the WEDC staff we spoke to and respondents from a number of local/regional ED organizations reported already using Salesforce. Respondents currently using Salesforce reported that it is helpful in managing employer contacts and activities. The main concerns we heard related to Salesforce are its limitations both in performing financial analyses and in its ability to allow for differential levels access and/or confidentiality. WDB and Job Center staff from a few WDAs reported using other
CRM tools including SAGE, IRMA, and Highrise. The training providers we spoke to did not report using any similar software tools to track employer contacts.

2.3.3 Processes for Sharing Information on Employer Skill Needs

The main themes that emerged regarding how workforce development stakeholders share information about employer skill needs are: 1) there is wide variation in with whom different types of organizations share information, and 2) there is no systematic approach for ensuring information is shared with the appropriate organizations. The only real venue for regular, systematic information sharing is periodic standing meetings held by different organizations or groups of organizations. Often these types of meetings are scheduled around once a month or even once a quarter, which can introduce a significant lag in the time it takes to convey information. Outside workforce system organizations, the employers we spoke to reported using a wide range of venues for reporting their skill needs to workforce development stakeholders, although they primarily reported sharing their skill needs with WDB and Job Center Staff.

In many cases, the WDBs and the BSRs are the links between workforce system stakeholders and are responsible for making sure that information about employer skill needs is shared, though there was some variation across WDAs in the organizations with which WDB staff and BSRs share employer skill information. Respondents from some WDBs primarily reported sharing employer skill needs with Job Center staff to inform the services provided to jobseekers, while respondents from other WDBs emphasized that information was shared with all workforce stakeholders including training providers and ED organizations. Despite this variation, a strong dependence on WDB and BSRs could potentially lead to a bottleneck in the flow of information, especially if one or two individuals are relied upon by many organizations as a major source of information, or if information sharing depends heavily on individual relationships.

In addition to sharing information with WDB staff and BSRs, ED and training provider respondents reported sharing information with each other. Some ED respondents reported sharing this information directly with training providers, while others reported sharing it with the WDB, which then takes the information to the training provider. Training provider respondents also reported that, in many cases, WDB and ED representatives are present during the trainers’ meetings with employers.

One unique information sharing challenge related to infrastructure support was described to us by WDB respondents from a particular WDA. In this WDA, the lack of information technology (IT) infrastructure in the region was said to make it difficult for stakeholders to communicate efficiently. The WDB in this region only recently began using email, for example, and it is likely that not only other workforce system stakeholders but also jobseekers in the area have similarly limited internet access. Related to this challenge, we were told that this WDA serves an aging workforce. The aging workforce and limited internet access combine to influence how
information is shared with jobseekers. For example, instead of listing job openings online, they are typically posted in a newspaper ad.

Employers reported communicating their skill needs on an as needed basis through job postings on the Job Center website. They also indicated that other ways they communicate their skill needs to WDB, Job Center, and training provider staff is through emails, informal meetings, and ad-hoc telephone conversations.

Another issue relevant to the sharing of information about what employers are looking for in jobseekers is confidentiality, which many organizations noted as a concern. For example, several ED and training providers we interviewed told us they typically do not share this kind of information with other workforce system stakeholders because the employers they work with consider the information confidential. These personnel worried that if an employer discovered that something they had communicated to an ED representative under an expectation of privacy was subsequently shared with others, it could damage the working relationship they have with the employer. As noted earlier, guarding information in this manner limits the ability of the workforce system to be proactive in helping employers find the workers they need.

### 2.4 Communicating Employer Needs to Training Providers

In order for the workforce system to provide jobseekers with the types of skills in demand among employers, employer needs must be shared with the training community. One objective of the process study was to document the processes by which employer skill needs are communicated to training providers. Accordingly, the site visit protocols included a section on this topic. For most WDAs, our site visit teams were able to speak to one or more local employers, allowing us to gain insights into whether, in their view, existing training programs meet the needs of local employers.

#### 2.4.1 Processes for Communicating with Training Providers

There is no systematic process in place for sharing employer skill needs with training providers. The means for sharing this information range from scheduled meetings to ad-hoc emails and phone conversations. WDB, BSR, and ED respondents all saw themselves as having two roles:

- To gather information from employers and communicate that information to training providers
- To facilitate direct conversations between training providers and other groups which understand employer needs.

Most WDB respondents reported providing information to training providers—primarily WTCS partners—to inform training programs, but the degree of information sharing varied across WDAs. For example, respondents from one WDA reported that the WDB provides high level guidance to training providers; respondents from other WDAs reported closer relationships, such as collaborating with WTCS to develop specific training programs like jobseeker boot
camps. The Job Center staff we spoke with primarily reported passing along what information they receive to WDB staff, the idea being that the WDB would then share it with training providers.

Respondents from ED organizations typically reported that they act as intermediaries between employers, training providers, and the WDBs. Some of these representatives also reported that they work with their area WDB to develop goals and strategies for addressing employer skill needs, but that the development of the actual training program is left to the training providers. Some of the employers told us that they share their needs with training providers directly through such venues as program advisory committees as well as through ad-hoc communications.

With many of the stakeholders acting as go-betweens for the sharing of information with training providers, there is significant potential for training providers to receive duplicative information that may be hard to organize.

### 2.4.2 Addressing the Skills Gap

One focus of our questions regarding how employer needs are conveyed to the training community was to gather information about how well workforce stakeholders feel the workforce system is helping prepare jobseekers with the right skills. In general, respondents have mixed feelings about the issue. Many noted that it is hard to determine if or how well employers’ needs are being met because they change so quickly. Further, some respondents indicated that they often receive inconsistent feedback from the different employers with which they work. A major theme across respondents, regardless of the organization they represented, was that few training programs adequately address the kinds of soft skills nearly all employers value.

When discussing how well the workforce system is addressing the skills gap, many of the people we spoke with offered their thoughts on ways to improve training programs in this regard. The suggestions given to us generally fall into three categories: program resources, training structure and delivery, and outreach/information:

- **Program resources**—suggestions related to the resources available to the workforce system included securing additional funding dollars for training, removing barriers that prevent willing but ineligible jobseekers from getting training, and finding ways to ease the restrictions that rules and regulations from funding sources often place on the ability of the workforce system to meet employer needs.

- **Training structure and delivery**—in terms of training programs themselves, respondents recommended implementing short-term programs that can quickly address immediate needs, creating programs with flexible schedules, developing programs to address basic soft skills including computer, reading, math, and communication skills, and providing more customized training programs for employers.
• **Outreach and Information**—related to outreach and information, we received many suggestions. For one, we were told there should be greater emphasis in K-12 programs on providing students with information on expected job growth in different industries and the credentials/training required for those industries. For example, many respondents mentioned that there is a stigma associated with manufacturing jobs that prevents needed workers from entering the industry. Another recommendation related to outreach was for the workforce system to do a better job promoting existing programs (both for services aimed at jobseekers and for services aimed at employers), and to target both older and underemployed workers to help those jobseekers improve their skill sets. Finally, many respondents indicated that more current and more reliable sources of information about the state of the labor market are needed to help the system become more proactive in developing the workforce to meet the needs of the state’s employers.
3. HOW DO EMPLOYERS FEEL ABOUT THE WORKFORCE SYSTEM?

One of the motivations for *Skills Wisconsin* is to help the workforce system improve the service it provides to employers. As evidence of the need for better coordination among workforce development, economic development, and training providers, program developers cited anecdotal evidence that employers are often contacted by different workforce system stakeholders and that the different organizations are seldom aware of interactions between the employer and other organizations. For example, someone from a local Job Center might speak to an employer on Monday and ask whether the employer is looking for workers. On Tuesday, the same employer might be contacted by an ED organization with similar questions. The volume of uncoordinated contact was viewed as burdensome to employers and often turned them off to working with the workforce system. One of the primary goals of *Skills Wisconsin* is to improve coordination among workforce system stakeholders so as to better manage their relationships with employers. The thinking was that reducing these duplicated efforts would lead to improved employer attitudes toward the workforce system.

To judge how employer perceptions of the workforce system change as *Skills Wisconsin* is implemented, the evaluation calls for gathering data on employer attitudes and experiences using a short survey. The first wave of the survey was sent to a random sample of 4,995 employers in April-May 2013. Its purpose is to establish a baseline understanding of employer sentiment before the program is implemented. A second wave of the survey will be fielded in April-May 2015 after implementation. Comparing the results of the two surveys will indicate whether employer perceptions of the workforce system have improved in the intervening two years. Although these comparisons will show whether and how important measures of employer satisfaction have evolved between survey waves, however, we cannot attribute any changes observed to *Skills Wisconsin* alone. Numerous other factors will certainly influence how employers feel about the workforce system (e.g., general economic conditions, other changes to how the workforce system operates). The purpose of the employer survey is not to isolate the effect of *Skills Wisconsin* from all other potential influences. Rather, the survey is intended simply to provide an idea of whether key measures of employer attitudes evolved in a manner we would expect, were *Skills Wisconsin* to be successful in its goals.

In the sections below, we describe the first wave of the survey, including how the sample of employers was chosen, the characteristics of those employers, how the survey was administered, and the survey response rate. We also analyze the data from the first wave, focusing on what the data tell us about how employers in Wisconsin feel about their experiences with the workforce system.

### 3.1 Survey Implementation

Not all employers in Wisconsin interact with the workforce system. To reach those employers with some experience working with the workforce system, IMPAQ obtained a list of all employers in the state of Wisconsin that had an open job order during the months of December
2012 and/or January 2013 to use as a sampling frame. Sampling from the universe of employers with open job orders reduced the chance that we would send surveys to employers that had never come into contact with the workforce system and would thus have little information to contribute to the analysis.

The sampling frame included records for 10,677 employers located throughout the state. To ensure that our survey sample was balanced across WDAs, we stratified the sample by WDA and then sampled proportionally from each. The final survey sample consisted of 4,995 employers in the state. Exhibit 8 presents the number of employers in each WDA in both the sampling frame and the final survey sample.

### Exhibit 8: Survey Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WDA</th>
<th>Sampling Frame</th>
<th>Survey Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01 – Southeast</td>
<td>639 (6.0%)</td>
<td>299 (6.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02 - Milwaukee</td>
<td>1,054 (9.9%)</td>
<td>493 (9.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03 – W-O-W</td>
<td>1,073 (10.0%)</td>
<td>502 (10.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04 - Fox Valley</td>
<td>1,380 (12.9%)</td>
<td>646 (12.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05 - Bay Area</td>
<td>1,685 (15.8%)</td>
<td>789 (15.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06 - North Central</td>
<td>1,222 (11.4%)</td>
<td>572 (11.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07 – Northwest</td>
<td>326 (3.1%)</td>
<td>152 (3.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08 - West Central</td>
<td>727 (6.8%)</td>
<td>340 (6.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09 – Western</td>
<td>526 (4.9%)</td>
<td>246 (4.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - South Central</td>
<td>1,567 (14.7%)</td>
<td>733 (14.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 – Southwest</td>
<td>478 (4.5%)</td>
<td>223 (4.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>10,677 (100%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,995 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among the employers that comprised our survey sampling frame, most were from WDAs with larger populations. The Bay Area WDA had the most employers in the data—1,685 of the 10,677 employers in the sampling frame (about 16 percent) were from this WDA. The WDAs with the next highest representation were South Central (14.7 percent), Fox Valley (12.9 percent), and North Central (11.4 percent). Northwest had the fewest employers in the sampling frame, with only 326 (3.1 percent). As expected due to the random selection of the survey sample, the distribution of employers among WDAs in the survey sample mirrored the distribution for the sampling frame.

In April 2013, the employers selected for the sample were mailed a paper copy of the survey instrument along with a cover letter explaining its purpose. The cover letter also included a web address for the online version of the survey that respondents could use instead of sending back the paper survey. About three weeks after the first mailing, a second (identical) mailing was implemented; all employers that had yet to respond to the survey received the second mailing.
Data collection was closed in late June 2013. Of the 4,995 employers included in the sample, 1,193 provided completed surveys, for a response rate of 24 percent.

One concern in analyzing the employer survey data is the potential bias introduced by the substantial survey non-response. If employers that responded to the survey are systematically different from those who did not respond, the results can present a skewed picture of sentiment among the larger group of employers that make up the overall survey sample. One way to assess the potential for non-response bias is to compare survey respondents to non-respondents. In addition to employer names and addresses, the data file that provided the sampling frame also included information on industry and number of employees.

Exhibit 9 shows the characteristics of the employers in the survey sample, both overall and separately for respondents and non-respondents. The last column highlights the difference in the proportion of respondents and non-respondents that fall into the corresponding category, along with the results of tests for whether a difference between the two groups is statistically significant or not. For example, the first row under the WDA heading shows that 5.9 percent of respondents were from the Southeast WDA, compared to 6.0 percent of non-respondents, a difference of 0.1 percentage points, which was not statistically significant. Positive numbers in the last column indicate that employers of that type are overrepresented among respondents; negative numbers reflect underrepresentation. Some results to note in Exhibit 9 include:

- At the WDA level, only Milwaukee showed a statistically significant difference in representation among respondents (9.9 percent of the total) than among non-respondents (10.8 percent of the total)—employers in the Milwaukee WDA were less likely to respond to the survey.
- In terms of industry, employers in manufacturing were much more likely to respond to the survey (27.4 percent vs. 16.1 percent). Employers in finance and insurance, retail trade, and accommodation and food services were less likely to respond.
- Lastly, the number of employees had a strong negative relationship with the likelihood of completing a survey. The smallest employers were most likely to respond; the larger the employer, the less likely it was to respond.

Because survey respondents differ from non-respondents in number of employees and, to a lesser degree, industry, these differences could potentially bias our analyses of the survey data. To ensure that our estimates are valid for the overall survey sample, not just the population of employers that responded to the survey, we incorporated non-response weights into all of our analyses. Because the focus of Skills Wisconsin is to improve the workforce system for the state as a whole, our analyses focus on results for the entire state.

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14 The process for computing the non-response weights involved three steps. First, we estimated a regression model where the dependent variable was an indicator variable equal to 1 for employers that returned the survey and 0 otherwise. Dependent variables included a constant, a set of indicator variables for WDAs, a set of indicator variables for industry, and a set of indicator variables for number of employees. Second, we used the estimated
### Exhibit 9: Characteristics of Survey Respondents and Non-Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Full Sample</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Non-Respondents</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N = 4,995</td>
<td>N = 1,193</td>
<td>N = 3,802</td>
<td>(B) – (C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(A)</td>
<td>(B)</td>
<td>(C)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WDA</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01 - Southeast</td>
<td>299 (6.0%)</td>
<td>70 (5.9%)</td>
<td>229 (6.0%)</td>
<td>-0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02 - Milwaukee</td>
<td>493 (9.9%)</td>
<td>83 (7.0%)</td>
<td>410 (10.8%)</td>
<td>-3.8**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03 - W-O-W</td>
<td>502 (10.1%)</td>
<td>121 (10.1%)</td>
<td>381 (10.0%)</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04 - Fox Valley</td>
<td>646 (12.9%)</td>
<td>145 (12.2%)</td>
<td>501 (13.2%)</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05 - Bay Area</td>
<td>789 (15.8%)</td>
<td>200 (16.8%)</td>
<td>589 (15.5%)</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06 - North Central</td>
<td>572 (11.5%)</td>
<td>154 (12.9%)</td>
<td>418 (11%)</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07 - Northwest</td>
<td>152 (3.0%)</td>
<td>50 (4.2%)</td>
<td>102 (2.7%)</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08 - West Central</td>
<td>340 (6.8%)</td>
<td>92 (7.7%)</td>
<td>248 (6.5%)</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09 - Western</td>
<td>246 (4.9%)</td>
<td>64 (5.4%)</td>
<td>182 (4.8%)</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - South Central</td>
<td>733 (14.7%)</td>
<td>162 (13.6%)</td>
<td>571 (15.0%)</td>
<td>-1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - Southwest</td>
<td>223 (4.5%)</td>
<td>52 (4.4%)</td>
<td>171 (4.5%)</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Industry</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>941 (18.8%)</td>
<td>327 (27.4%)</td>
<td>614 (16.1%)</td>
<td>11.3**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care and Social Assistance</td>
<td>737 (14.8%)</td>
<td>183 (15.3%)</td>
<td>554 (14.6%)</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance and Insurance</td>
<td>531 (10.6%)</td>
<td>65 (5.4%)</td>
<td>466 (12.3%)</td>
<td>-6.8**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Trade</td>
<td>463 (9.3%)</td>
<td>71 (6.0%)</td>
<td>392 (10.3%)</td>
<td>-4.4**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Support, Waste Management, and Remediation Services</td>
<td>361 (7.2%)</td>
<td>77 (6.5%)</td>
<td>284 (7.5%)</td>
<td>-1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale Trade</td>
<td>314 (6.3%)</td>
<td>84 (7.0%)</td>
<td>230 (6%)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation and Food Services</td>
<td>298 (6.0%)</td>
<td>42 (3.5%)</td>
<td>256 (6.7%)</td>
<td>-3.2**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services</td>
<td>234 (4.7%)</td>
<td>54 (4.5%)</td>
<td>180 (4.7%)</td>
<td>-0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation and Warehousing</td>
<td>185 (3.7%)</td>
<td>53 (4.4%)</td>
<td>132 (3.5%)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>166 (3.3%)</td>
<td>45 (3.8%)</td>
<td>121 (3.2%)</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>765 (15.3%)</td>
<td>192 (16.1%)</td>
<td>573 (15.1%)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Employees</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer than 50</td>
<td>1,703 (34.1%)</td>
<td>507 (42.5%)</td>
<td>1,196 (31.5%)</td>
<td>11.0**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-99</td>
<td>693 (13.9%)</td>
<td>205 (17.2%)</td>
<td>488 (12.8%)</td>
<td>4.4**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-499</td>
<td>1,534 (30.7%)</td>
<td>336 (28.2%)</td>
<td>1,198 (31.5%)</td>
<td>-3.3*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 or more</td>
<td>1,065 (21.3%)</td>
<td>145 (12.2%)</td>
<td>920 (24.2%)</td>
<td>-12.0**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Wisconsin Employer Survey. Statistical significance: ** = 1 percent; * = 5 percent

**parameters from the regression model to predict the probability of completing a survey for each employer in the sample. Finally, we set the non-response weight for each employer equal to the inverse of the predicted probability from step 2.**
3.2 Survey Results

Tabulations of responses to all questions included in the employer survey are included in Appendix B. Below, we describe the survey results as they pertain to four key topics: 1) employer interaction with the workforce system, 2) employer perceptions of jobseeker quality, 3) satisfaction with services received from the workforce system, and 4) overall ratings of how well the state’s workforce system serves businesses.

Interaction with the workforce system. One of the survey questions asked respondents to report how much they interacted with the workforce system in the past year—not at all, a little, some, or a lot (see Exhibit 10).

Exhibit 10: Employer Interaction with the Workforce System
Overall, 87 percent of employers had at least a little interaction with the workforce system; 45 percent reported some or a lot.\textsuperscript{15} Such a high proportion of employers reporting contact with the workforce system is encouraging, in that it suggests the employer perceptions reflected in the survey results are based on actual experiences with the system.

The amount of interaction reported by employers in the prior year varies with employer industry (see Exhibit 11). The last column of Exhibit 11 shows the sum of the second and third columns. For example, the third row of the exhibit shows that 37 percent of employers in manufacturing reported some interaction with the workforce system and an additional 15 percent reported a lot. In total, therefore, 52 percent of employers in manufacturing had at least some interaction with the workforce system.

\begin{center}
\textbf{Exhibit 11: Employer Interaction with the Workforce System, by Industry}
\end{center}

\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Industry} & \textbf{Some Interaction} & \textbf{A lot of interaction} & \textbf{Total} \\
\hline
Health Care and Social Assistance & 45.1\% & 11.6\% & 56.7\% \\
Administrative Support, Waste Management, and Remediation Services & 32.9\% & 21.1\% & 54.0\% \\
Manufacturing & 36.6\% & 14.8\% & 51.5\% \\
Other & 33.4\% & 12.4\% & 45.8\% \\
Transportation and Warehousing & 39.8\% & 3.7\% & 43.5\% \\
Construction & 34.6\% & 5.3\% & 39.8\% \\
Wholesale Trade & 33.7\% & 4.1\% & 37.9\% \\
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services & 34.2\% & 3.5\% & 37.7\% \\
Finance and Insurance & 25.6\% & 10.3\% & 36.0\% \\
Accommodation and Food Services & 26.0\% & 6.5\% & 32.4\% \\
Retail Trade & 19.2\% & 8.9\% & 28.1\% \\
\hline
\end{tabular}

Exhibit 11 shows that:

- A greater proportion of employers in the health care and social assistance industry (57 percent) reported at least some interaction with the workforce system than employers in any other industry.
- Other industries in which employers reported high levels of at least some interaction include administrative support, waste management, and remediation services (54 percent); and manufacturing (52 percent).

\textsuperscript{15} Not all employers reported interaction with the workforce system despite the fact that all employers in the sampling frame had an open job order in December 2012/January 2013. In addition to other potential causes, this could be because not all job orders were necessarily placed through direct interaction with the workforce system. Some could have been posted online and then passively captured by the database we used for the sampling frame.
Employers in the administrative support, waste management, and remediation services industry interacted with the workforce system the most intensively, with over 21 percent of employers in this industry having had a lot of interaction with the workforce system.

Interaction with the workforce system also varied with employer size. Exhibit 12 is analogous to Exhibit 11, but shows estimates by number of employees rather than by industry.

**Exhibit 12: Employer Interaction with the Workforce System, by Number of Employees**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Employees</th>
<th>Some Interaction</th>
<th>A lot of interaction</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fewer than 50</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>34.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-99</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>49.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-499</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>49.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 or more</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>52.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The figures in Exhibit 12 indicate that:

- The smallest employers were least likely of all employer sizes to report at least some interaction with the workforce system.
- Employers with 50 or more employees generally reported having some or a lot of interaction with the same frequency (about 50 percent).
- Interestingly, the largest employers were much more likely than smaller ones to report having a lot of interaction with the workforce system. This could be because these employers are more visible in their communities. In addition, large employers may be more likely to have dedicated, robust HR departments to act as a liaison between the company and workforce organizations.

**Jobseeker quality.** An important objective of *Skills Wisconsin* is to increase the capability of the workforce system to deliver qualified jobseekers to fill open positions in Wisconsin businesses. Employer perceptions of the quality of jobseekers referred by the workforce system is therefore a valuable indicator of whether the program has been successful. To speak to this aspect of the program, the survey asked employers to rate the overall quality of jobseekers referred by the workforce system to Wisconsin businesses. Ratings were given on a 5-point scale: 1) very low, 2) low, 3) average, 4) high, and 5) very high quality. Exhibit 13 shows the distribution of employer responses to this question.

Two-thirds of employers rate jobseekers referred by the workforce system as being of average quality. A larger proportion of employers report that jobseekers are below (nearly 25 percent) than above average quality (a bit over 8 percent).
There is some variation across industries in employer perceptions of jobseeker quality. As the first row of Exhibit 14 shows, for example, among employers in the accommodation and food services industry, 10 percent rated jobseekers below average (i.e., very low or low quality), 71 percent rated them of average quality, and the remaining 19 percent rated them above average.


Exhibit 14: Employer Rating of Jobseeker Quality by Industry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Below Average</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Above Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation and Food Services</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>70.9%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Support, Waste Management, and Remedia</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>45.7%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
<td>66.2%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance and Insurance</td>
<td>42.7%</td>
<td>50.9%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care and Social Assistance</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>75.7%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
<td>67.7%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>73.6%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>57.7%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Trade</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>71.2%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation and Warehousing</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>80.9%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale Trade</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
<td>64.0%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exhibit 14 also highlights other interesting results, including:

- With the exception of the administrative support, waste management, and remediation services industry, the proportion of employers rating jobseekers referred from the workforce system as average was fairly consistent across industries, ranging from about 60 percent to 70-75 percent.

- Employers in two industries—finance and insurance; and administrative support, waste management, and remediation services—were most likely to rate jobseekers below average, with 43 percent of employers doing so.

- In several industries employers were more likely to give jobseekers an above-average rating. For example, in the accommodation and food services industry, nearly one in five employers said that jobseekers referred by the workforce system were of above average quality. And at least one of ten employers in the administrative support, waste management, and remediation services; health care and social assistance; and professional, scientific, and technical services industries likewise gave jobseekers above-average ratings.

Although employer perceptions of jobseeker quality varied with industry, no such variation was associated with employer size (see Exhibit 15). For employers of all sizes, about two-thirds of employers rated jobseekers referred by the workforce system as of average quality. Around 20-30 percent rated them below average, and 8-9 percent rated them above average.
In addition to varying by industry, employer perceptions of jobseeker quality could be related to the frequency with which an employer interacts with the workforce system. To investigate this possibility, Exhibit 16 presents the distribution of jobseeker quality ratings for four key industries—the specific industries in which the highest proportions of employers reported having a lot of interaction with the workforce system (see Exhibit 11).

### Exhibit 16: Employer Rating of Jobseeker Quality by Industry, for Employers Reporting a Lot of Interaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Below Average</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Above Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Support, Waste Management,</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td>56.2%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Remediation Services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance and Insurance</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
<td>56.3%</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care and Social Assistance</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
<td>64.0%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For each of the four industries, employers reporting the most interaction with the workforce system also gave higher ratings of jobseeker quality. For example, among all employers in the finance and insurance industry, only 6.4 percent rated jobseekers as above average (Exhibit 14). However, among employers in the same industry that reported a lot of interaction with the workforce system, nearly 19 percent rated jobseekers referred by the workforce system as above average (Exhibit 16). These results are not surprising given that employers able to find high-quality employees through the workforce system can be expected to approve of, and therefore be more likely to continue using, that system in the future.

**Satisfaction with services received.** Beyond understanding how employers feel about the jobseekers referred to them by the workforce system, another focus of the employer survey was to gather data on how employers feel in general about the services provided to them by the workforce system. Employers were asked to report their level of satisfaction with the services they had received from the workforce system in the prior year using a four-point scale: 1) very dissatisfied, 2) dissatisfied, 3) satisfied, and 4) very satisfied. Exhibit 17 shows the estimated proportions of all employers falling into each category, excluding employers that reported having had no interaction with the workforce system during the prior year.
Over three-quarters of employers reported being either satisfied or very satisfied with the services they received from the workforce system. Less than 22 percent of employers report being either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

The pattern of how employers rated the services received from the workforce system was similar across industries with two exceptions. Exhibit 18 shows the proportion of employers in each industry that reported negative ratings (very dissatisfied or dissatisfied) and the proportion that reported positive ratings (satisfied or very satisfied), again excluding employers that reported no interaction with the workforce system in the prior year.
Employer satisfaction with services received from the workforce system was mostly consistent across industries, but two industries stand out. Two notable findings from Exhibit 18 are:

- In both the accommodation and food services industry and the health care and social assistance industry, over 87 percent of employers reported positive views of the services received from the workforce system.
- For all other specific industries shown, the proportion with positive views was between 63 and 83 percent.

In addition to the relationship between employer industry and reported sense of satisfaction with workforce system services, there was one notable relationship between satisfaction and number of employees. Exhibit 19 is analogous to Exhibit 18, but with employers categorized by number of employees rather than industry.

Employers of all sizes were roughly equally likely to report positive views of the services they had received, with one exception—the smallest employers were more likely to report negative views. Among employers with fewer than 50 employees, 28 percent had negative views,
roughly 10 percentage points higher than among mid-sized employers and 6 percentage points higher than among large employers.

**Rating of service to businesses.** Broadly speaking, the overall goal of *Skills Wisconsin* is to improve the ability of the workforce system to meet the needs of employers in the state. Understanding what employers think about how well the workforce system serves businesses *before* the program is implemented, as noted, provides a baseline against which progress can be measured once the grant has been fully implemented. At the end of the employer survey, respondents were asked to give their opinion of how well the workforce system serves businesses in the state. Possible responses were: 1) poor, 2) fair, 3) good, 4) very good, and 5) excellent. Exhibit 20 shows the distribution of employer responses to this question.

**Exhibit 20: Employer Ratings of How Well the Workforce System Serves Businesses**

The most common response among employers (given by 44.9 percent) was that Wisconsin’s workforce system does a good job serving businesses in the state. However, a substantial proportion of employers reported less positive views of the workforce system—40.6 percent rated the workforce system as doing either a poor or fair job serving businesses. Only 14.5 percent said the system is doing a very good or an excellent job.
Perceptions of how well the workforce system serves business varied noticeably across industries. Exhibit 21 summarizes employer ratings by industry.

**Exhibit 21: Employer Ratings of How Well the Workforce System Serves Businesses, by Industry**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation and Food Services</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>40.1%</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Support, Waste Management, and Remediation Services</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>42.2%</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
<td>48.7%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance and Insurance</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care and Social Assistance</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
<td>58.0%</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Trade</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
<td>33.6%</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation and Warehousing</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale Trade</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Several observations stand out:

- Employers in the accommodation and food services industry give the workforce system higher ratings than employers in other industries, with 23 percent rating the workforce system as doing a very good job serving Wisconsin businesses.

- Two other industries in which employers gave the workforce system good reviews were the health care and social assistance industry and the retail trade industry. In health care and social assistance, 16.8 percent of employers responded that the workforce system does a very good job; in retail trade 14.5 percent of employers did so.

- At the other extreme, employers in a small number of industries were more likely to give the workforce system negative reviews. The proportion of employers reporting that the workforce system does a poor job serving businesses was highest in professional, scientific, and technical services (12 percent); construction (11.5 percent); retail trade (10.9 percent); and transportation and warehousing (10.2 percent).

Mirroring the pattern observed for employer perceptions of jobseeker quality, employer ratings of how well the workforce system serves business were also consistent for all but the smallest employers (see Exhibit 22).
Exhibit 22: Employer Ratings of How Well the Workforce System Serves Businesses, by Number of Employees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Employees</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fewer than 50</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
<td>42.2%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-99</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-499</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
<td>50.5%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 or more</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the most part, employers of different sizes gave generally similar ratings of how well the workforce system serves businesses. About 40-50 percent said the workforce system does a good job; about 37-45 percent had a more negative view, and about 11-18 percent had a more positive view. However, a much larger proportion of small employers—those with fewer than 50 employees—felt that the workforce system does a poor job of serving businesses, compared to employers of other sizes. Among small employers, 10.5 percent gave the workforce system a poor rating, more than double the proportion for employers of any other size.

3.3 Summary

To establish a baseline understanding of employer opinions related to their interactions with the workforce system, we surveyed 4,995 Wisconsin businesses that had recent open job orders. Of these employers, 1,193 completed the survey, for a response rate of 24 percent. The appropriately weighted survey results provide a number of insights into employer experiences with the workforce system:

- A large proportion of employers reported a meaningful amount of interaction with the workforce system, with 45 percent saying they had either some or a lot of interaction with the workforce system in the prior year.
- Employers in the health care and social assistance; administrative support, waste management, and remediation services; and manufacturing industries had the most interaction with the workforce system.
- Larger employers had more interaction than smaller employers.
- Two-thirds of employers rated the jobseekers referred to them from the workforce system as being of average quality. Roughly 25 percent rated them as below average; about 8 percent rated them above average.
- Compared to employers in other industries, employers in the accommodation and food services; administrative support, waste management, and remediation services; health care and social assistance; and professional, scientific, and technical services industries were more likely than employers in other industries to give jobseekers above average ratings. Employers in two industries—finance and insurance; and administrative
support, waste management, and remediation services—were most likely to rate jobseekers from the workforce system as below average quality.

- Among employers in the four key industries reporting a lot of interaction with the workforce system—administrative support, waste management, and remediation services; finance and insurance; health care and social assistance; and manufacturing—between 8 percent and 19 percent rated jobseeker quality as above average.

- Over 75 percent of employers said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the services they received from the workforce system.

- Employers in the accommodation and food services and the health care and social assistance industries reported higher satisfaction with the services received from the workforce system than those in other industries. Over 87 percent of employers in each of those industries reported positive views.

- Small employers (those with fewer than 50 employees) were more likely to report negative views than employers of other sizes.

- Among all employers, 45 percent said that the workforce system does a good job serving businesses in the state; 41 percent gave a more negative view; slightly less than 15 percent gave an even more positive view.

- Employers in the accommodation and food services industry had the most favorable opinion of how well the workforce system serves businesses; 23 percent of those employers said the system does a very good job. Employers in health care and social assistance and retail trade also had more favorable opinions than employers in other industries.

- The proportion of employers reporting that the workforce system does a poor job was highest in four industries: professional, scientific, and technical services (12 percent); construction (11.5 percent); retail trade (10.9 percent); and transportation and warehousing (10.2 percent).

- A much larger proportion (10.5 percent) of small employers (those with fewer than 50 employees) compared to employers of other sizes felt that the workforce system does a poor job of serving businesses, compared to employers of other sizes.

Using these results as a baseline, the results from the second wave of the employer survey will allow us to examine the extent to which employer experiences with and perceptions of the workforce system have improved concurrently with the implementation of *Skills Wisconsin*. 
4. CONCLUSION

The *Skills Wisconsin* program is intended to improve collaboration and communication among the various stakeholder organizations that make up Wisconsin’s workforce system. By moving toward a more demand-driven model and implementing new communication and relationship management tools through Salesforce, the project will enhance the ability of the workforce system to connect the two sides of Wisconsin’s labor market—jobseekers and employers.

To document how Wisconsin’s workforce system operated before the implementation of grant activities, we conducted a round of in-person site visits to all 11 WDAs in the state, gathering information on communication patterns among stakeholders, the processes used to identify the skills Wisconsin businesses are looking for in jobseekers, and how that information is communicated to training providers.

The qualitative data we gathered from interviews with key personnel in each WDA showed that there is generally significant communication among the various stakeholders in the workforce system. This was confirmed by the SNA, which showed that communication patterns within the workforce system are relatively diffuse and not concentrated among a small number of key players.

However, regarding interactions with employers in particular, there appears to be little coordination either across different types of organizations or across WDAs. In some cases, sophisticated software tools are used to manage contact with employers. In others, individual staff may track their own interactions independently using their own ad-hoc methods (e.g., a desktop spreadsheet). Moreover, it is not uncommon for information, particularly any employer information that might be regarded as sensitive, to be guarded by the organization that receives it. Employer relationships are highly valuable and take time and effort to cultivate. In some cases, the perceived risk that sharing employer information could damage those relationships causes organizations to hesitate to share the information with others in the workforce system.

In terms of translating input from employers into actual training programs for jobseekers, there are multiple channels through which this occurs. Multiple stakeholders, including the WDBs, BSRs at Job Centers, and representatives from WEDC or other ED organizations often act as intermediaries to convey this information or to facilitate direct discussions between employers and WTCS (or other training providers). Such direct communication between employers and the training community are also typical. The fruit of these information exchanges—the training programs developed by WTCS and others—are generally seen as responsive, though there is a feeling that soft skills could be emphasized more, and that more could be done to increase awareness among employers about the types of services offered through the workforce system.
To support the outcomes analysis component of the evaluation, we also conducted the first wave of an employer survey, targeting businesses in the state that had recent open job orders. Based on data gathered from nearly 1,200 employers in the state, we found that two-thirds rated the jobseekers referred to them by the workforce system as of average quality. Roughly 25 percent of the other employers gave jobseekers a below-average rating and about 8 percent an above-average rating. Employer perceptions of jobseeker quality varied by industry, with employers in the finance and insurance industry and the administrative support, waste management, and remediation services industry most likely to rate jobseekers as below-average quality. Employers in accommodation and food services; health care and social assistance; and professional, scientific, and technical services industries were more likely to give employers above-average ratings. Across all industries, over three-quarters of employers reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the services they receive from the workforce system, though small employers—those with fewer than 50 employees—were more likely to report negative views. Finally, our survey results indicated that employers have mixed feelings about how well the workforce system is serving businesses in the state. About 45 percent said the workforce system does a good job; but 41 percent had a more negative view and less than 15 percent had a more positive view.

Overall, the analyses presented in this report provide a detailed description of how the different stakeholders in Wisconsin’s workforce system communicate with one another and how they work together to serve the state’s jobseekers and businesses. They also give a thorough account of how the state’s employers feel about their interactions with the workforce system and their opinions about how well the workforce system serves businesses. This baseline understanding of how Wisconsin workforce system has operated prior to the implementation of Skills Wisconsin will serve as a benchmark from which to measure progress in key areas once grant operations have been completed.
APPENDIX A. SITE VISIT DISCUSSION GUIDES

1. Workforce Development Board
2. Job Center
3. Training Provider
4. Economic Development Organization
5. Employer
Thank you for agreeing to speak with us today. My name is <name> and this is <name>, and we are researchers from IMPAQ International, a public policy research organization based in the Washington, D.C. area. We are here today because IMPAQ International has been hired to conduct an independent evaluation of the Skills Wisconsin Initiative. As part of the evaluation, we’re conducting detailed site visits to all 11 of Wisconsin’s Workforce Development Areas over the next several months. In each site, we’ll be speaking with key workforce development stakeholders, including individuals from the Workforce Development Board, Job Centers, Training providers, Employers, and Economic Development Organizations.

The purpose of this site visit is to provide us with an in-depth understanding of how workforce development stakeholders communicate with one another (and perceptions of how effective that communication is), how the workforce development system identifies the workforce needs of employers, and how the needs of employers inform the development of job training programs and other services. Our aim is to learn from your experiences, not to audit or judge your work in any way. The information you provide to us will be used in combination with what we learn from others to produce an overview of how things work in this WDA. Your comments are confidential and you will not be identified by name in any report.

<NAME> will be taking notes while we talk. With your permission, we would also like to record this session so that we can refer to the audio to clarify our notes later if necessary. Do we have your permission to begin recording? Thank you.

1. Background and Context

We’d like to start off with some general questions to give us a little bit of background.

- What is your current position and how long have you been at [ORGANIZATION]?
- What is main goal/mission of your organization?
- What is the role of your organization in workforce development?
- Can you describe your individual role and job responsibilities?
- Can you describe the economic context of the area you serve?
  - Unemployment rate
  - Major Employers/Industries
  - Trends in employment across industries?
2. Communication among Agencies/Organizations

Now we’d like to talk about how you communicate with other stakeholders in the workforce development community. This set of questions specifically addresses the mode, frequency, and characterization of your communication.

- **Workforce Development Boards:**
  - In your position, do you communicate with staff at Workforce Development Boards in Wisconsin’s other workforce development regions?
  - Can you describe this communication?
    - How do you communicate? (phone, email, in-person meetings, U.S. mail)
    - What do you communicate about?
    - How often do you communicate? (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly)
    - Do you think the frequency of communications is adequate?
    - How would you characterize this communication?
      - Do you have to ask for information that you need? Or is it provided to you without requesting it? (Forced)
      - Is the communication one-sided, with information traveling in one direction? Or does the information travel in both directions? (Reciprocal)
      - Do you communicate with staff members at this organization that are in similar/higher/lower level positions? (Level)
    - Do you believe this communication is valuable? How?
    - Is the information shared put to use?

- **Economic Development Organizations:**
  - In your position, do you communicate with staff at the local Economic Development Boards/Organizations?
  - Can you describe this communication?
- How do you communicate? (phone, email, in-person meetings, U.S. mail)
- What do you communicate about?
- How often do you communicate? (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly)
- Do you think the frequency of communications is adequate?
- How would you characterize this communication?
  - Do you have to ask for information that you need? Or is it provided to you without requesting it? (Forced)
  - Is the communication one-sided, with information traveling in one direction? Or does the information travel in both directions? (Reciprocal)
  - Do you communicate with staff members at this organization that are in similar/higher/lower level positions? (Level)
- Do you believe this communication is valuable? How?
- Is the information shared put to use?

**Job Center:**
- In your position, do you communicate with staff at the Job Center?
- Can you describe this communication?
  - How do you communicate? (phone, email, in-person meetings, U.S. mail)
  - What do you communicate about?
  - How often do you communicate? (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly)
  - Do you think the frequency of communications is adequate?
  - How would you characterize this communication?
    - Do you have to ask for information that you need? Or is it provided to you without requesting it? (Forced)
• Is the communication one-sided, with information traveling in one direction? Or does the information travel in both directions? (Reciprocal)

• Do you communicate with staff members at this organization that are in similar/higher/lower level positions? (Level)
  ▪ Do believe this communication is valuable? How?
  ▪ Is the information shared put to use?

• Training Providers:
  o In your position, do you communicate with staff at the local training providers?
  o Can you describe this communication?
    ▪ How do you communicate? (phone, email, in-person meetings, U.S. mail)
    ▪ What do you communicate about?
    ▪ How often do you communicate? (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly)
    ▪ Do you think the frequency of communications is adequate?
    ▪ How would you characterize this communication?
      • Do you have to ask for information that you need? Or is it provided to you without requesting it? (Forced)
      • Is the communication one-sided, with information traveling in one direction? Or does the information travel in both directions? (Reciprocal)
      • Do you communicate with staff members at this organization that are in similar/higher/lower level positions? (Level)
        ▪ Do you believe this communication is valuable? How?
        ▪ Is the information shared put to use?
• Employers:
  o In your position, do you communicate with staff of local employers (if employer, ask about other employers)?
  o Can you describe this communication?
    ▪ How do you communicate? (phone, email, in-person meetings, U.S. mail)
    ▪ What do you communicate about?
    ▪ How often do you communicate? (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly)
    ▪ Do you think the frequency of communications is adequate?
    ▪ How would you characterize this communication?
      • Do you have to ask for information that you need? Or is it provided to you without requesting it? (Forced)
      • Is the communication one-sided, with information traveling in one direction? Or does the information travel in both directions? (Reciprocal)
      • Do you communicate with staff members at this organization that are in similar/higher/lower level positions? (Level)
        ▪ Do you believe this communication is valuable? How?
        ▪ Is the information shared put to use?
  • Other than those organizations already discussed, do you communicate with other stakeholders around workforce development? (repeat following line of questioning for each stakeholder mentioned)
    o Can you describe this communication?
      ▪ How do you communicate? (phone, email, in-person meetings, U.S. mail)
      ▪ What do you communicate about?
      ▪ How often do you communicate? (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly)
Do you think the frequency of communications is adequate?

How would you characterize this communication?

- Do you have to ask for information that you need? Or is it provided to you without requesting it? (Forced)
- Is the communication one-sided, with information traveling in one direction? Or does the information travel in both directions? (Reciprocal)
- Do you communicate with staff members at this organization that are in similar/higher/lower level positions? (Level)

Do you believe this communication is valuable? How?

Is the information shared put to use?

3. Identifying Employer Skill Needs

Now that we’ve covered communications, we want to turn to how you are involved in identifying what employers are looking for in job candidates.

- What is your organization’s role in the process of identifying the workforce needs of local employers? (if respondent indicates no role for organization, omit this section)

- Are there existing Industry Partnerships in your WDA?

  (Industry Partnerships: Partnerships between industry leadership and other workforce development stakeholders to provide industry input into the creation of new training curricula.)
  
  o How many partnerships are there?
  o Which industries are covered?
  o Can you describe how the partnerships are involved with workforce development?
  o Are there any plans to develop new partnerships or expand existing ones?
  o If so, which industries are to be targeted for new partnerships?

- How do you identify the skills that employers are seeking in job candidates?
  
  o Do you consult local employers? If so, how? How often?
  o Do you consult employers in other regions? If so, how? How often?
o Do you consult Economic Development Organizations? If so, how? How often?
o Do you consult WDBs from other regions? If so, how? How often?

- What tools/resources do you use to manage your contacts/employment information sources?
  o Do you use salesforce.com?
  o How do you use these tools?

- Across organizations involved in workforce development, with whom do you share information about the skill needs of employers?
  o Other WDBs
  o Job Center staff
  o Training/Education Providers (WTCS, others)
  o Economic Development organizations

  - How do you share this information?
  - How often do you share this information?

4. Matching Training to Employer Needs

Now we have a few questions about how employer skill needs are incorporated into training programs.

- What is your organization’s role in developing workforce training programs? (if no role, omit this section)

- Can you describe the process for communicating employer skill needs to the training community?
  o What organizations are involved?
  o Who shares information with whom?
  o How often is this information shared?

- Do you think the workforce development system as a whole is currently providing training to job seekers that meets the needs of local employers? Why?
- What changes would you make to improve address the any gap between the skills provided in training and the skills needs of local employers?

5. Productivity in the Workforce Development System

Finally, we have a few questions about the productivity of the workforce development system. Specifically, we want to know your opinions on the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of the workforce development system.

- Given the information available to the workforce development system, how would you rate the quality of the services provided to job seekers by the workforce development system on a scale of 1 to 5? (1= low, 3=medium, 5=high)
  - Why did you give this rating?
  - What do you believe is the biggest impediment to improving this rating?

- Given the information available to the workforce development system, how would you rate the effectiveness of the services provided to job seekers by the workforce development system on a scale of 1 to 5? (1= low, 3=medium, 5=high)
  - Why did you give this rating?
  - What do you believe is the biggest impediment to improving this rating?

- Given the information available to the workforce development system, how would you rate the efficiency of the process through which services are provided to job seekers by the workforce development system on a scale of 1 to 5? (1= low, 3=medium, 5=high)
  - Why did you give this rating?
  - What do you believe is the biggest impediment to improving this rating?

- What changes do you think would increase the productivity/efficiency of the workforce development system?

- In aspects of your job that relate to workforce development, are there specific areas of communication and/or information sharing that, if improved, would increase your productivity, efficiency?
Thank you for agreeing to speak with us today. My name is <name> and this is <name>, and we are researchers from IMPAQ International, a public policy research organization based in the Washington, D.C. area. We are here today because IMPAQ International has been hired to conduct an independent evaluation of the Skills Wisconsin Initiative. As part of the evaluation, we’re conducting detailed site visits to all 11 of Wisconsin’s Workforce Development Areas over the next several months. In each site, we’ll be speaking with key workforce development stakeholders, including individuals from the Workforce Development Board, Job Centers, Training providers, Employers, and Economic Development Organizations.

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- What is the role of your organization in workforce development?
- Can you describe your individual role and job responsibilities?
- Can you describe the economic context of the area you serve?
  - Unemployment rate
  - Major Employers/Industries
  - Trends in employment across industries?
2. Communication among Agencies/Organizations

Now we’d like to talk about how you communicate with other stakeholders in the workforce development community. This set of questions specifically addresses the mode, frequency, and characterization of your communication.

- Workforce Development Boards:
  - In your position, do you communicate with staff at the local Workforce Development Board?
  - Can you describe this communication?
    - How do you communicate? (phone, email, in-person meetings, U.S. mail)
    - What do you communicate about?
    - How often do you communicate? (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly)
    - Do you think the frequency of communications is adequate?
    - How would you characterize this communication?
      - Do you have to ask for information that you need? Or is it provided to you without requesting it? (Forced)
      - Is the communication one-sided, with information traveling in one direction? Or does the information travel in both directions? (Reciprocal)
      - Do you communicate with staff members at this organization that are in similar/higher/lower level positions? (Level)

- Economic Development Organizations:
  - In your position, do you communicate with staff at the local Economic Development Boards/Organizations?
  - Can you describe this communication?
How do you communicate? (phone, email, in-person meetings, U.S. mail)
What do you communicate about?
How often do you communicate? (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly)
Do you think the frequency of communications is adequate?
How would you characterize this communication?
  • Do you have to ask for information that you need? Or is it provided to you without requesting it? (Forced)
  • Is the communication one-sided, with information traveling in one direction? Or does the information travel in both directions? (Reciprocal)
  • Do you communicate with staff members at this organization that are in similar/higher/lower level positions? (Level)
Do you believe this communication is valuable? How?
Is the information shared put to use?

**Job Center:**

  o In your position, do you communicate with staff at other regional/local Job Centers?
  o Can you describe this communication?
    ▪ How do you communicate? (phone, email, in-person meetings, U.S. mail)
    ▪ What do you communicate about?
    ▪ How often do you communicate? (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly)
    ▪ Do you think the frequency of communications is adequate?
    ▪ How would you characterize this communication?
      • Do you have to ask for information that you need? Or is it provided to you without requesting it? (Forced)
- Is the communication one-sided, with information traveling in one direction? Or does the information travel in both directions? (Reciprocal)
- Do you communicate with staff members at this organization that are in similar/higher/lower level positions? (Level)
  - Do you believe this communication is valuable? How?
  - Is the information shared put to use?

**Training Providers:**
- In your position, do you communicate with staff at the local training providers?
- Can you describe this communication?
  - How do you communicate? (phone, email, in-person meetings, U.S. mail)
  - What do you communicate about?
  - How often do you communicate? (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly)
  - Do you think the frequency of communications is adequate?
  - How would you characterize this communication?
    - Do you have to ask for information that you need? Or is it provided to you without requesting it? (Forced)
    - Is the communication one-sided, with information traveling in one direction? Or does the information travel in both directions? (Reciprocal)
    - Do you communicate with staff members at this organization that are in similar/higher/lower level positions? (Level)
      - Do you believe this communication is valuable? How?
      - Is the information shared put to use?
• Employers:
  o In your position, do you communicate with staff of local employers?
  o Can you describe this communication?
    ▪ How do you communicate? (phone, email, in-person meetings, U.S. mail)
    ▪ What do you communicate about?
    ▪ How often do you communicate? (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly)
    ▪ Do you think the frequency of communications is adequate?
    ▪ How would you characterize this communication?
      • Do you have to ask for information that you need? Or is it provided to you without requesting it? (Forced)
      • Is the communication one-sided, with information traveling in one direction? Or does the information travel in both directions? (Reciprocal)
      • Do you communicate with staff members at this organization that are in similar/higher/lower level positions? (Level)
        ▪ Do you believe this communication is valuable? How?
        ▪ Is the information shared put to use?
  • Other than those organizations already discussed, do you communicate with other stakeholders around workforce development? (repeat following line of questioning for each stakeholder mentioned)
    o Can you describe this communication?
      ▪ How do you communicate? (phone, email, in-person meetings, U.S. mail)
      ▪ What do you communicate about?
      ▪ How often do you communicate? (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly)
      ▪ Do you think the frequency of communications is adequate?
How would you characterize this communication?

- Do you have to ask for information that you need? Or is it provided to you without requesting it? (Forced)
- Is the communication one-sided, with information traveling in one direction? Or does the information travel in both directions? (Reciprocal)
- Do you communicate with staff members at this organization that are in similar/higher/lower level positions? (Level)

Do you believe this communication is valuable? How?

Is the information shared put to use?

3. Identifying Employer Skill Needs

Now that we’ve covered communications, we want to turn to how you are involved in identifying what employers are looking for in job candidates.

- What is your organization’s role in the process of identifying the workforce needs of local employers?
- How do you identify the skills that employers are seeking in job candidates?
  - Do you consult local employers? If so, how? How often?
  - Do you consult employers in other regions? If so, how? How often?
  - Do you consult Economic Development organizations? If so, how? How often?
  - Do you consult the local WDB? If so, how? How often?
  - Do you consult WDBs from other regions? If so, how? How often?
- Across organizations involved in workforce development, with whom do you share information about the skill needs of employers?
  - Job Center Clients
  - Job Center staff in other regions
  - Training/Education Providers (WTCS, others)
  - Economic Development organizations
How do you share this information?

How often do you share this information?

What tools/resources do you use to manage your contacts/employment information sources? (If applicable)
  o Do you use salesforce.com?
  o How do you use these tools?

4. Matching Training to Employer Needs

Now we have a few questions about how employer skill needs are incorporated into training programs.

- What is your organization’s role in developing workforce training programs? (if no role, omit this section)
- Can you describe the process for communicating employer skill needs to the training community?
  o What organizations are involved?
  o Who shares information with whom?
  o How often is this information shared?
- Do you think the workforce development system as a whole is currently providing training to job seekers that meets the needs of local employers? Why?
- What changes would you make to improve address the any gap between the skills provided in training and the skills needs of local employers?

5. Productivity in the Workforce Development System

Finally, we have a few questions about the productivity of the workforce development system. Specifically, we want to know your opinions on the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of the workforce development system.

- Given the information available to the workforce development system, how would you rate the quality of the services provided to job seekers by the workforce development system on a scale of 1 to 5? (1= low, 3=medium, 5=high)
• Why did you give this rating?
• What do you believe is the biggest impediment to improving this rating?

- Given the information available to the workforce development system, how would you rate the **effectiveness** of the services provided to job seekers by the workforce development system on a scale of 1 to 5? (1= low, 3=medium, 5=high)
  - Why did you give this rating?
  - What do you believe is the biggest impediment to improving this rating?

- Given the information available to the workforce development system, how would you rate the **efficiency** of the process through which services are provided to job seekers by the workforce development system on a scale of 1 to 5? (1= low, 3=medium, 5=high)
  - Why did you give this rating?
  - What do you believe is the biggest impediment to improving this rating?

- On average, how long does it take to identify job leads for Job Center clients?

- What changes do you think would increase the productivity/efficiency of the workforce development system?

- In aspects of your job that relate to workforce development, are there specific areas of communication and/or information sharing that, if improved, would increase your productivity, efficiency?
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1. Background and Context

We’d like to start off with some general questions to give us a little bit of background.

- What is your current position and how long have you been at [ORGANIZATION]?
- What is main goal/mission of your organization?
- What is the role of your organization in workforce development?
- Can you describe your individual role and job responsibilities?
- Can you describe the economic context of the area you serve?
  - Unemployment rate
  - Major Employers/Industries
  - Trends in employment across industries?
2. Communication among Agencies/Organizations

Now we’d like to talk about how you communicate with other stakeholders in the workforce development community. This set of questions specifically addresses the mode, frequency, and characterization of your communication.

- **Workforce Development Boards:**
  - In your position, do you communicate with staff at the local Workforce Development Board?
  - Can you describe this communication?
    - How do you communicate? (phone, email, in-person meetings, U.S. mail)
    - What do you communicate about?
    - How often do you communicate? (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly)
    - Do you think the frequency of communications is adequate?
    - How would you characterize this communication?
      - Do you have to ask for information that you need? Or is it provided to you without requesting it? (Forced)
      - Is the communication one-sided, with information traveling in one direction? Or does the information travel in both directions? (Reciprocal)
      - Do you communicate with staff members at this organization that are in similar/higher/lower level positions? (Level)
        - Do you believe this communication is valuable? How?
        - Is the information shared put to use?

- **Economic Development Organizations:**
  - In your position, do you communicate with staff at the local Economic Development Boards/Organizations?
  - Can you describe this communication?
- How do you communicate? (phone, email, in-person meetings, U.S. mail)
- What do you communicate about?
- How often do you communicate? (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly)
- Do you think the frequency of communications is adequate?
- How would you characterize this communication?
  - Do you have to ask for information that you need? Or is it provided to you without requesting it? (Forced)
  - Is the communication one-sided, with information traveling in one direction? Or does the information travel in both directions? (Reciprocal)
  - Do you communicate with staff members at this organization that are in similar/higher/lower level positions? (Level)
- Do you believe this communication is valuable? How?
- Is the information shared put to use?

- **Job Center:**
  - In your position, do you communicate with staff at the Job Center?
  - Can you describe this communication?
    - How do you communicate? (phone, email, in-person meetings, U.S. mail)
    - What do you communicate about?
    - How often do you communicate? (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly)
    - Do you think the frequency of communications is adequate?
    - How would you characterize this communication?
      - Do you have to ask for information that you need? Or is it provided to you without requesting it? (Forced)
• Is the communication one-sided, with information traveling in one direction? Or does the information travel in both directions? (Reciprocal)

• Do you communicate with staff members at this organization that are in similar/higher/lower level positions? (Level)
  ▪ Do you believe this communication is valuable? How?
  ▪ Is the information shared put to use?

• **Employers:**
  
  o In your position, do you communicate with staff of local employers?
  
  o Can you describe this communication?
    ▪ How do you communicate? (phone, email, in-person meetings, U.S. mail)
    ▪ What do you communicate about?
    ▪ How often do you communicate? (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly)
    ▪ Do you think the frequency of communications is adequate?
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      ▪ Do you communicate with staff members at this organization that are in similar/higher/lower level positions? (Level)
        ▪ Do you believe this communication is valuable? How?
        ▪ Is the information shared put to use?

• Other than those organizations already discussed, do you communicate with other stakeholders around workforce development? (repeat following line of questioning for each stakeholder mentioned)
3. Identifying Employer Skill Needs

Now that we’ve covered communications, we want to turn to how you are involved in identifying what employers are looking for in job candidates.

- How do you receive information about employer skill needs?
- Who do you receive this information from?
- How often do you receive this information?
- Are there certain organizations from who you receive the most information, regarding employer skill needs?
- Do you consider this information to be up to date? Reliable?
- How do you use this information?
• Do you provide any information to other organizations (such as WDBs, Job Centers) on employer skill needs?

4. Matching Training to Employer Needs

Now we have a few questions about how employer skill needs are incorporated into training programs.

• What is your organization’s role in developing workforce training programs? (if no role, omit this section)
• Can you describe the process for communicating employer skill needs to your organization?
  o What organizations are involved?
  o Who shares information with whom?
  o How often is this information shared?
• Do you think the workforce development system as a whole is currently providing training to job seekers that meet the needs of local employers? Why?
• What changes would you make to improve address the any gap between the skills provided in training and the skills needs of local employers?

5. Productivity in the Workforce Development System

Finally, we have a few questions about the productivity of the workforce development system. Specifically, we want to know your opinions on the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of the workforce development system.

• Given the information available to the workforce development system, how would you rate the quality of the services provided to job seekers by the workforce development system on a scale of 1 to 5? (1= low, 3=medium, 5=high)
  o Why did you give this rating?
  o What do you believe is the biggest impediment to improving this rating?
• Given the information available to the workforce development system, how would you rate the effectiveness of the services provided to job seekers by the workforce development system on a scale of 1 to 5? (1= low, 3=medium, 5=high)
  o Why did you give this rating?
  o What do you believe is the biggest impediment to improving this rating?
• Given the information available to the workforce development system, how would you rate the efficiency of the process through which services are provided to job seekers by the workforce development system on a scale of 1 to 5? (1= low, 3=medium, 5=high)
  o Why did you give this rating?
  o What do you believe is the biggest impediment to improving this rating?
• What changes do you think would increase the productivity/efficiency of the workforce development system?
• In aspects of your job that relate to workforce development, are there specific areas of communication and/or information sharing that, if improved, would increase your productivity, efficiency?
Thank you for agreeing to speak with us today. My name is <name> and this is <name>, and we are researchers from IMPAQ International, a public policy research organization based in the Washington, D.C. area. We are here today because IMPAQ International has been hired to conduct an independent evaluation of the Skills Wisconsin Initiative. As part of the evaluation, we’re conducting detailed site visits to all 11 of Wisconsin’s Workforce Development Areas over the next several months. In each site, we’ll be speaking with key workforce development stakeholders, including individuals from the Workforce Development Board, Job Centers, Training providers, Employers, and Economic Development Organizations.

The purpose of this site visit is to provide us with an in-depth understanding of how workforce development stakeholders communicate with one another (and perceptions of how effective that communication is), how the workforce development system identifies the workforce needs of employers, and how the needs of employers inform the development of job training programs and other services. Our aim is to learn from your experiences, not to audit or judge your work in any way. The information you provide to us will be used in combination with what we learn from others to produce an overview of how things work in this WDA. Your comments are confidential and you will not be identified by name in any report.

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1. Background and Context

We’d like to start off with some general questions to give us a little bit of background.

- What is your current position and how long have you been at [ORGANIZATION]?

- What is main goal/mission of your organization?

- Can you describe your individual role and job responsibilities?

- What is the role of your organization in workforce development?

- Can you describe the economic context of the area you serve?
  - Unemployment rate
  - Major Employers/Industries
  - Trends in employment across industries?
2. Communication among Agencies/Organizations

Now we’d like to talk about how you communicate with other stakeholders in the workforce development community. This set of questions specifically addresses the mode, frequency, and characterization of your communication.

- **Workforce Development Boards:**
  - In your position, do you communicate with staff at the local Workforce Development Board?
  - Can you describe this communication?
    - How do you communicate? (phone, email, in-person meetings, U.S. mail)
    - What do you communicate about?
    - How often do you communicate? (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly)
    - Do you think the frequency of communications is adequate?
    - How would you characterize this communication?
      - Do you have to ask for information that you need? Or is it provided to you without requesting it? (Forced)
      - Is the communication one-sided, with information traveling in one direction? Or does the information travel in both directions? (Reciprocal)
      - Do you communicate with staff members at this organization that are in similar/higher/lower level positions? (Level)
        - Do you believe this communication is valuable? How?
        - Is the information shared put to use?

- **Economic Development Organizations:**
  - In your position, do you communicate with staff at other regional/local Economic Development Boards/Organizations?
  - Can you describe this communication?
- How do you communicate? (phone, email, in-person meetings, U.S. mail)
- What do you communicate about?
- How often do you communicate? (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly)
- Do you think the frequency of communications is adequate?
- How would you characterize this communication?
  - Do you have to ask for information that you need? Or is it provided to you without requesting it? (Forced)
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  - Do you communicate with staff members at this organization that are in similar/higher/lower level positions? (Level)
- Do you believe this communication is valuable? How?
- Is the information shared put to use?

  - **Job Center:**
    - In your position, do you communicate with staff at the local Job Center?
    - Can you describe this communication?
      - How do you communicate? (phone, email, in-person meetings, U.S. mail)
      - What do you communicate about?
      - How often do you communicate? (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly)
      - Do you think the frequency of communications is adequate?
      - How would you characterize this communication?
        - Do you have to ask for information that you need? Or is it provided to you without requesting it? (Forced)
- Is the communication one-sided, with information traveling in one direction? Or does the information travel in both directions? (Reciprocal)

- Do you communicate with staff members at this organization that are in similar/higher/lower level positions? (Level)
  - Do you believe this communication is valuable? How?
  - Is the information shared put to use?

**Training Providers:**
- In your position, do you communicate with staff at the local training providers?
- Can you describe this communication?
  - How do you communicate? (phone, email, in-person meetings, U.S. mail)
  - What do you communicate about?
  - How often do you communicate? (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly)
  - Do you think the frequency of communications is adequate?
  - How would you characterize this communication?
    - Do you have to ask for information that you need? Or is it provided to you without requesting it? (Forced)
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    - Do you communicate with staff members at this organization that are in similar/higher/lower level positions? (Level)
      - Do you believe this communication is valuable? How?
      - Is the information shared put to use?

**Employers:**
- In your position, do you communicate with staff of local employers?
o Can you describe this communication?
  ▪ How do you communicate? (phone, email, in-person meetings, U.S. mail)
  ▪ What do you communicate about?
  ▪ How often do you communicate? (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly)
  ▪ Do you think the frequency of communications is adequate?
  ▪ How would you characterize this communication?
    • Do you have to ask for information that you need? Or is it provided to you without requesting it? (Forced)
    • Is the communication one-sided, with information traveling in one direction? Or does the information travel in both directions? (Reciprocal)
    • Do you communicate with staff members at this organization that are in similar/higher/lower level positions? (Level)
      ▪ Do you believe this communication is valuable? How?
      ▪ Is the information shared put to use?
  ▪ Other than those organizations already discussed, do you communicate with other stakeholders around workforce development? (repeat following line of questioning for each stakeholder mentioned)
    o Can you describe this communication?
      ▪ How do you communicate? (phone, email, in-person meetings, U.S. mail)
      ▪ What do you communicate about?
      ▪ How often do you communicate? (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly)
      ▪ Do you think the frequency of communications is adequate?
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  ▪ Do you believe this communication is valuable? How?
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3. Identifying Employer Skill Needs

Now that we’ve covered communications, we want to turn to how you are involved in identifying what employers are looking for in job candidates.

▪ What is your organization's role in identifying the workforce needs of local employers? (if respondent indicates no role for organization, omit this section)
▪ Are you provided with information regarding employment opportunities or employer skill needs by outside organizations? If so, which organizations?
▪ Do you provide information regarding employment opportunities or employer skill needs to outside organizations? If so, which organizations?
▪ To whom do you provide or from whom do you receive employment/labor market information or employer skill needs?
▪ How is this information shared?
▪ How often is this information shared?
▪ What tools/resources do you use to manage your contacts/employment information sources?
  ▪ Do you use salesforce.com?
  ▪ How do you use these tools?
4. Matching Training to Employer Needs

Now we have a few questions about how employer skill needs are incorporated into training programs.

- Can you describe the process for communicating employer skill needs to the training community?
  - What organizations are involved?
  - Who shares information with whom?
  - How often is this information shared?
- Describe your role, if any, in the process of communicating employer skill needs to the training community.
- Describe your role, if any, in developing new services or new training programs for jobseekers.
- Do you think the workforce development system as a whole is currently providing training to job seekers that meets the needs of local employers? Why?
- What changes would you make to improve address the any gap between the skills provided in training and the skills needs of local employers?

5. Productivity in the Workforce Development System

Finally, we have a few questions about the productivity of the workforce development system.

- Thinking in terms of quality, effectiveness, and efficiency how would you rate the workforce development system’s productivity on a scale of 1 to 5? (1= low, 3=medium, 5=high)
  - Why did you give this rating?
  - What do you believe is the biggest impediment to improving this rating?
- What changes do you think would increase the productivity of the workforce development system?
- In aspects of your job that relate to workforce development, are there specific areas of communication and/or information sharing that, if improved, would increase your productivity, efficiency?
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1. Background and Context

We’d like to start off with some general questions to give us a little bit of background.

- What is your current position and how long have you been at [ORGANIZATION]?
- Can you briefly describe the organization you work for? (size, products/services, staff roles)
- Can you describe your individual role and job responsibilities?
- Please briefly describe the interactions your organization has had with the workforce development system, including with organizations such as the local Workforce Development Board, Job Centers, economic development agencies, and the technical college system.
2. Communication among Agencies/Organizations

Now we’d like to talk about how you communicate with other stakeholders in the workforce development community. This set of questions specifically addresses the mode, frequency, and characterization of your communication.

- **Workforce Development Boards:**
  - In your position, do you communicate with staff at the local Workforce Development Board?
  - Can you describe this communication?
    - How do you communicate? (phone, email, in-person meetings, U.S. mail)
    - What do you communicate about?
    - How often do you communicate? (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly)
    - Do you think the frequency of communications is adequate?
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      - Do you have to ask for information that you need? Or is it provided to you without requesting it? (Forced)
      - Is the communication one-sided, with information traveling in one direction? Or does the information travel in both directions? (Reciprocal)
      - Do you communicate with staff members at this organization that are in similar/higher/lower level positions? (Level)
        - Do you believe this communication is valuable? How?
        - Is the information shared put to use?
  
- **Economic Development Organizations:**
  - In your position, do you communicate with staff at the local Economic Development Boards/Organizations?
  - Can you describe this communication?
- How do you communicate? (phone, email, in-person meetings, U.S. mail)
- What do you communicate about?
- How often do you communicate? (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly)
- Do you think the frequency of communications is adequate?
- How would you characterize this communication?
  - Do you have to ask for information that you need? Or is it provided to you without requesting it? (Forced)
  - Is the communication one-sided, with information traveling in one direction? Or does the information travel in both directions? (Reciprocal)
  - Do you communicate with staff members at this organization that are in similar/higher/lower level positions? (Level)
- Do you believe this communication is valuable? How?
- Is the information shared put to use?

- **Job Center:**
  - In your position, do you communicate with staff at the Job Center?
  - Can you describe this communication?
    - How do you communicate? (phone, email, in-person meetings, U.S. mail)
    - What do you communicate about?
    - How often do you communicate? (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly)
    - Do you think the frequency of communications is adequate?
    - How would you characterize this communication?
      - Do you have to ask for information that you need? Or is it provided to you without requesting it? (Forced)
• Is the communication one-sided, with information traveling in one direction? Or does the information travel in both directions? (Reciprocal)

• Do you communicate with staff members at this organization that are in similar/higher/lower level positions? (Level)
  ▪ Do believe this communication is valuable? How?
  ▪ Is the information shared put to use?

• Training Providers:
  ▪ In your position, do you communicate with staff at the local training providers?
  ▪ Can you describe this communication?
    ▪ How do you communicate? (phone, email, in-person meetings, U.S. mail)
    ▪ What do you communicate about?
    ▪ How often do you communicate? (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly)
    ▪ Do you think the frequency of communications is adequate?
    ▪ How would you characterize this communication?
      ▪ Do you have to ask for information that you need? Or is it provided to you without requesting it? (Forced)
      ▪ Is the communication one-sided, with information traveling in one direction? Or does the information travel in both directions? (Reciprocal)
      ▪ Do you communicate with staff members at this organization that are in similar/higher/lower level positions? (Level)
        ▪ Do you believe this communication is valuable? How?
        ▪ Is the information shared put to use?
• Other than those organizations already discussed, do you communicate with other stakeholders around workforce development? (repeat following line of questioning for each stakeholder mentioned)
  o Can you describe this communication?
    ▪ How do you communicate? (phone, email, in-person meetings, U.S. mail)
    ▪ What do you communicate about?
    ▪ How often do you communicate? (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly)
    ▪ Do you think the frequency of communications is adequate?
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      • Do you communicate with staff members at this organization that are in similar/higher/lower level positions? (Level)
        ▪ Do you believe this communication is valuable? How?
        ▪ Is the information shared put to use?

3. Identifying Employer Skill Needs

Now that we’ve covered communications, we want to turn to how you are involved in identifying what employers are looking for in job candidates.

• Have you ever communicated your workforce needs (e.g., types of workers you are looking for, skills you need job candidates to have) to the workforce development system, such as the Job Center, the Workforce Development Board, or an economic development organization?
  o If yes, with what organizations do you communicate this information?
4. Matching Training to Employer Needs

Now we have a few questions about how employer skill needs are incorporated into training programs.

- Are you familiar with the process for communicating employer skill needs to the training community?
  - What organizations are involved?
  - Who shares information with whom?
  - How often is this information shared?

- How does your organization communicate the skill sets you need in employees to the workforce development/training community?

- Is the workforce development system as a whole is currently providing training to job seekers that meets the needs of your organization? Why?

- What changes would you make to improve address the any gap between the skills provided in training and the skills needs of local employers?

5. Productivity in the Workforce Development System

Finally, we have a few questions about the productivity of the workforce development system.

- Thinking in terms of quality, effectiveness, and efficiency how would you rate the workforce development system’s productivity on a scale of 1 to 5? (1= low, 3=medium, 5=high)
o Why did you give this rating?

o What do you believe is the biggest impediment to improving this rating?

- What changes do you think would increase the productivity of the workforce development system?
- In aspects of your job that relate to workforce development, are there specific areas of communication and/or information sharing that, if improved, would increase your productivity, efficiency?
Exhibit B.1. Survey Question 1

**Q1: Which of the following best describes the amount of interaction your company has had with the workforce system?**

- No interaction: 13.8%
- A little interaction: 41.5%
- Some interaction: 33.7%
- A lot of interaction: 11.0%
Exhibit B.2. Survey Question 2

Q2: How often has your company interacted with the following types of organizations?

- Job Centers
  - Never: 11.3%
  - Occasionally: 26.3%
  - Often: 62.4%

- Workforce Development Boards
  - Never: 3.7%
  - Occasionally: 19.5%
  - Often: 76.9%

- WEDC
  - Never: 1.9%
  - Occasionally: 15.2%
  - Often: 82.9%

- Local or Regional Economic Development Organizations
  - Never: 4.6%
  - Occasionally: 23.7%
  - Often: 71.7%

- WTCS
  - Never: 17.1%
  - Occasionally: 30.8%
  - Often: 52.1%
Q3: Has your company considered filling one or more jobs with jobseekers identified through the workforce system?
Q4: How would your company rate the overall quality of jobseekers referred by the workforce system to Wisconsin businesses?
Q5: About how long did it take to fill each job opening?

- Less than 2 weeks: 7.3%
- Between 2 weeks and 1 month: 38.7%
- Between 1 and 3 months: 47.6%
- More than 3 months: 6.3%
Q6: In terms of finding skilled workers to fill job openings, how well has the workforce system met the needs of your company? Would you say your needs are ...

![Bar Chart]

- Never met: 13.8%
- Mostly not met: 39.3%
- Mostly met: 44.6%
- Completely met: 2.3%
Q7: How would your company rate its overall satisfaction with the ability of the workforce system to help your company find skilled workers to fill job openings?
Q8: How would your company describe the number of contacts it receives from organizations in the workforce system?
Q9: How would your company rate its level of understanding of the services available through the workforce system?

- Very low: 9.4%
- Low: 45.2%
- High: 41.9%
- Very high: 3.5%
Q10: Overall, how satisfied is your company with the services it has received?
Exhibit B.11. Survey Question 11

Q11: Please rate how well the workforce system serves Wisconsin businesses.

- Poor: 6.8%
- Fair: 33.8%
- Good: 44.9%
- Very Good: 13.3%
- Excellent: 1.2%