**Illinois Workforce Investment Board (IWIB) Equity Taskforce Policy Workgroup Recommendations:**

**Strategies to Remove Barriers to Equity in Programs, Policies, and Practices**

Draft October 3, 2021

The Equity Taskforce Policy Workgroup met over the past year to discuss strategies to remove barriers to equity in programs, policies, and practices. These discussions included a specific focus on the ability of culturally responsive community-based organizations to qualify for the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) (see page 5). Workgroup discussions also covered programs, policies, and practices from across the full range of services available to workforce system customers, as well as governance policies and practices at the state and regional level. The Equity Taskforce Co-Leads have also raised issues related to governance and leadership that are reflected here. This document captures potential recommendations that the workgroup can further discuss and refine. All recommendations are drawn explicitly from workgroup discussions, except for those noted in the footnotes, which were presented to the workgroup in meetings but not discussed in depth.

**Workforce System Customer Flowchart**

The recommendations in this document are organized around the following general workforce system customer flowchart. Actual customer experiences at IL American Job Centers (AJCs) vary by AJC and are usually more complex. However, this is offered as a potential general structure for workgroup recommendations. For each element in the flowchart, the document notes barriers identified by the workgroup, the potential source of those barriers, if known, and potential workgroup recommendations.

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| **Customer Experience is Impacted by Workforce System Structure and Governance** |

|  | **Barrier** | **Source** | **Potential Recommendations** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| System Structure and Governance | The voices and experiences of workforce system customers may not be centered in decisions impacting the design quality of workforce system services. | State procurement policies and procurement design  State and regional staffing and board membership policies  State and regional policy and program development processes | Examine recipients of competitively awarded Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding to understand the extent to which there is currently an equitable investment of funds. Adopt policies to ensure equitable fund disbursement going forward.   * Governor’s set aside funding * Competitive grants * AJC competitions   Issue guidance emphasizing the importance of hiring/nominating workforce system leaders, board members, and staff that reflect the diversity of the populations. Recognize governing bodies and AJCs that achieve this goal.  Ensure that equity is a key consideration in the development of new IWIB policies, programs, and budgets by requiring policy committees to use [an equity tool](https://racialequityalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/GARE-Racial_Equity_Toolkit.pdf) for analyzing policies and programs through an equity lens.  Make disaggregated data available to all local workforce areas, provide training on how to interpret it, and encourage policy committees to set equity goals that reflect the unique needs of their area.[[1]](#footnote-1)  Create conditions where workforce leaders and staff can [acknowledge](https://www.racialequitytools.org/act/communicating/implicit-bias) and [challenge](https://diversity.ucsf.edu/resources/strategies-address-unconscious-bias) their own implicit bias and understand the structural barriers impacting customers[[2]](#footnote-2)  Encourage local workforce boards to include input of impacted groups in decisions about the design and delivery of employment programming and policies guiding local workforce systems.[[3]](#footnote-3) |

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| **Workforce System Customer Flow** | | | |
|  | **Barrier** | **Source** | **Potential Recommendations** |
| Recruitment | Transition to virtual services has limited the number of people walking into AJCs, increasing the importance of intentional recruitment strategies for target populations.  WIOA performance metrics incentivize providers to serve job seekers with better employment prospects and facing the fewest barriers to success, making it difficult for those with the greatest need for workforce programs to access them. |  | Provide training to local workforce areas on effective outreach and recruitment strategies. Recognize local workforce areas that are effective in this work.  Take advantage of WIOA performance policy to focus services on [individuals with barriers to employment](https://www.clasp.org/publications/fact-sheet/wioa-performance-targets-incentives-improve-workforce-services-individuals)[[4]](#footnote-4) |
|  | **Barrier** | **Source** | **Potential Recommendations** |
| Enrollment | AJC policies and practices may create unnecessary barriers to program access. | Local policy and practice | Provide training to AJCS on common local policies/practices that impact equity such as:[[5]](#footnote-5)   * [Prohibiting children](https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/97426/family-centered_approaches_to_workforce_program_services_4.pdf) at American Job Centers * Hours of operation; access; location * Instituting restrictive program eligibility criteria and intake processes (including choice of assessments) * Under-resourcing supportive services   Create [customer-centered design training](https://ion.workforcegps.org/resources/2016/10/12/11/24/Customer_Centered_Design) for local AJCs to empower AJC staff to build equitable service delivery strategies.[[6]](#footnote-6)  Update AJC procurement and monitoring policies to encourage identification and removal of local barriers to equity. |
| Career Counseling and Job Search | Occupational training choice is highly correlated to race and gender in the IL workforce system. Some traditional occupations may lead to poor outcomes.  Digital tools and internet access are vital job search and career advancement resources, yet it is difficult for AJCs to cover these costs.[[7]](#footnote-7) | tbd | Provide capacity building and training for AJC staff on how to identify implicit bias and remove it from their counseling.  Communicate opportunities for local workforce areas to access resources for key activities, including:   * Computer/tablet purchases for clients. * Expending program funds for home internet access as well as partnering with broader municipal internet accessibility efforts. * Digital literacy training as a core component of workforce preparation (this is a good opportunity for alignment with WIOA Title II, adult education). |
|  | **Barrier** | **Source** | **Potential Recommendations** |
| Job Training | Culturally responsive community-based organizations have trouble qualifying for the ETPL.  Some for-profit training institutions on the ETPL provide career promises but poor completion and employment outcomes.[[8]](#footnote-8) |  | Help culturally responsive community-based organizations qualifying for the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL):   * Provide training to such organizations on how to use and navigate the system. * Add criteria to the ETPL policy about whether training organizations are mission driven, and whether they have community support.   Include in the revised ETPL policy requirements to evaluate outcomes and ban predatory training companies that have a track record of poor completion and employment outcomes.  Examine the equity impacts of current criteria for the demand occupations list and ensure that local areas have a non-burdensome process for including local in-demand occupations. |
| Job Placement | *Note to Workgroup: Has the workgroup identified any barriers or recommendations in this areas?* |  | Public workforce system leaders should support employers with tools to advance equity. This could include educating employer partners about training in equity and in [trauma-informed care](https://www.heartlandalliance.org/now-more-than-ever-we-need-to-create-tauma-informed-workplaces/), promoting training as a requirement for partnership, and/or developing and implementing practices that will increase sustainable placement for workers of color, such as new-hire cohorts and trauma-informed management strategies. Encourage approaches that “prepare jobs for people” rather than “prepare people for jobs,” and support employer partners in doing the same.[[9]](#footnote-9) |

1. [Source: Five Things Public Workforce Systems Should Do Now to Advance Racial Equity | Heartland Alliance](https://www.heartlandalliance.org/five-things-public-workforce-systems-should-do-now-to-advance-racial-equity/) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [Source: Five Things Public Workforce Systems Should Do Now to Advance Racial Equity | Heartland Alliance](https://www.heartlandalliance.org/five-things-public-workforce-systems-should-do-now-to-advance-racial-equity/) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [Source: Five Things Public Workforce Systems Should Do Now to Advance Racial Equity | Heartland Alliance](https://www.heartlandalliance.org/five-things-public-workforce-systems-should-do-now-to-advance-racial-equity/) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Source: [WIOA Performance Targets: Incentives to Improve Workforce Services for Individuals with Barriers to Employment | CLASP](https://www.clasp.org/publications/fact-sheet/wioa-performance-targets-incentives-improve-workforce-services-individuals) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. [Source: Family-Centered Approaches to Workforce Program Services (urban.org)](https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/97426/family-centered_approaches_to_workforce_program_services_4.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Source: [TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT GUIDANCE LETTER No. 07-20, Employment & Training Administration (ETA) - U.S. Department of Labor (doleta.gov)](https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr_doc.cfm?DOCN=8675) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Barrier identified in ETF member Bridget Altenburg in September presentation ABLE [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Barrier identified in ETF member Bridget Altenburg in September presentation [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. [Source: Five Things Public Workforce Systems Should Do Now to Advance Racial Equity | Heartland Alliance](https://www.heartlandalliance.org/five-things-public-workforce-systems-should-do-now-to-advance-racial-equity/) [↑](#footnote-ref-9)