

**SAN FRANCISCO'S CAREER LINK CENTERS:
AN INTER-CONNECTED EMPLOYMENT/TRAINING PARTNERSHIP**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (called CalWORKs in California) and Workforce Investment Act (WIA) share the common goal of needing to be employment-focused. In most localities, the two programs have co-existed, but in some localities, the management responsibility has been designated to different governing bodies. For example, in Santa Clara County, CalWORKs is managed by the County's Social Services Agency, whereas, the WIA is managed by the City of San Jose.

For my case study, I examined San Francisco's Career Link Centers, a concept of a consortium-run, one-stop system that is made up by a collaboration between the City/County of San Francisco and other employment/training partners. The San Francisco model represents a well integrated system with good outcomes, and is cost-effective. San Francisco's model has several inherent factors that make the program successful.

Internal factors include:

- A shared vision
- Consistent and continuous efforts from all partners
- All partners are represented by decision-makers of their agencies
- The partners with more resources contribute more and provide leadership roles
- A formalized structure determining who will do what
- A few key staff who work exclusively for the consortium
- Multiple levels of reporting, including an operations committee and an oversight committee

External factors include:

- Good public transportation
- A diversified economy
- A small geography

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INTRODUCTION

Santa Clara County has some unique challenges when it comes to the collaboration of the one-stop concept and welfare-to-work services.

Geographically, Santa Clara County is more widespread than many counties, including San Francisco. It is made up of many small cities with one single large city – San Jose. Santa Clara County also does not have a good public transportation system that can take workers without cars to employers. Furthermore, the economic structure is unevenly distributed. The county's employment is heavily dominated by high technology companies spreading throughout the northern and middle areas of the county, with agriculture at the southern area of the county. All these characteristics make co-location of services on a large scale hard to accomplish.

Added to this challenge is the fact that the management responsibility of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and welfare-to-work programs has been designated to distinct government bodies. The WIA authority is co-managed by the City of San Jose, under the Silicon Valley Investment Network (SVWIN), and for the northern region, the City of Sunnyvale, under the North Valley Silicon Valley (NOVA). SVWIN cover a big region and has set up three one-stop centers – at San Jose Eastside, in Campbell City in an Employment Development Department (EDD) building, and in Gilroy in the South County. NOVA is much smaller in scale, and

operates one one-stop center at Sunnyvale with EDD.

The government agency that manages the welfare-to-work activities for CalWORKs and General Assistance (single adult clients) is the County of Santa Clara's Social Services Agency (SSA). SSA's Employment Benefits Division/CalWORKs Employment Services Program has its career centers called "Employment Connection Centers."

The unique needs of the south and north areas have made partnership naturally easier among the employment/training organizations. NOVA one-stop is located across from the CalWORKs. Though not entirely co-located in the same building, CalWORKs clients are encouraged by their workers to use the one-stop services. In the south, SSA's Employment Connection is co-located with the WIA One-Stop and EDD. In the central area, CalWORKs Employment Services and SVWIN have partnered significantly on job fair and summer youth activities. Co-location and crossover of services, in general, have not happened.

The challenges of Santa Clara County sparked my interest in finding out how another Bay Area county addresses the linkages between CalWORKs and WIA. My case study examines San Francisco's Career Link One-Stop which was created through a community partnership.

Additionally, it examines how the City and County of San Francisco has utilized this One-Stop system to better serve CalWORKs and GA clients.

BACKGROUND

The passage of the welfare reform bill, Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (H.R. 3734), incorporated language that limited lifetime benefits for welfare recipients and imposed mandatory work activity participation. This compelled government programs and human services agencies, which provide activities for welfare recipients and low income families, to become increasingly employment-focused in their welfare-to-work program design.

Within two years of welfare reform implementation, the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 was created to replace the Job Training Partnership Act and the Wagner-Peyser Act. WIA created a new, comprehensive work force investment system that included a one-stop delivery concept that streamlined access to numerous workforce investment, educational activities, programs, and other human services. This goal of the one-stop system was to provide co-location of resources for job-seekers to assist them in managing their careers, and a job linkage system to help US companies find workers.

Both legislations, H.R. 3734 and WIA, shared program goals that required partnership among service providers, and focus on employment outcomes.

Before and during the development of this legislation, there was much speculation relative to the details of program policies. Throughout California, government agencies, community organizations, educational institutions, as well as local Private Industry Councils (the bodies responsible for the Department of Labor's job and training services) started to partner and share strategies to provide a more inter-connected and efficient employment/training system.

It was during this transition time that a group of San Francisco's employment/training partners, the City and County of San Francisco Department of Human Services (DHS), Employment Development Department (EDD), San Francisco Private Industry Council, San Francisco City College, and a few non-profit organizations, decided to take a proactive role in the design of this future system. They held ad hoc meetings, and when the opportunity was ripe and WIA funding became available in 1999, San Francisco started to co-locate services at 3120 Mission Street, which was, at that time, an EDD Unemployment Insurance office. It is now leased by DHS. They formalized their partnership into a consortium through a memorandum of understanding. Their vision led to what has now become "the Career Link One-Stop Centers.

TODAY'S SAN FRANCISCO CAREER LINK

Currently, San Francisco operates three Career Link Centers, one a full-service One-Stop. The other two are satellite centers. The consortium receives approximately \$750,000 in annual WIA funding. Though the amount is small compared to the entire WIA allocation of \$5 million, the partners have been able to leverage funds through in-kind contributions in the forms of facilities and staffing. The centers receive approximately 11,000 customer visits per month, and assist job-seekers and employers in matching about 230 positions per month.

The biggest center remains at its original location on Mission Street. It is a full service one-stop center that includes core as well as intensive services. It is housed and led by DHS. The DHS Workforce Development Division is designated as the fiscal agency for the consortium. The second center is located at 1800 Oakdale, also known as the

Southeast Center, and is housed by City College of San Francisco. The third is located at 801 Turk Street and is housed and managed by the Employment Development Department. The co-sharing of space has made multiple centers available for the convenience of job-seekers.

Co-located services range from social service benefits offices, unemployment insurance, supervised children's playroom, and disability services. Co-located services might also include housing services, Job Corps for youth, and senior services. Some of the services are provided by consortium partners. Some are provided by other community agencies.

The career centers have job search equipment and tools, which include computers with internet access, fax machines, and telephones. Job listings are available as part of the self-directed services. Job-seekers are offered assistance with job matching, application screening, resume development, and good interview technique by signing up for workshops that are pre-scheduled throughout the month.

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED

I am intrigued by San Francisco's Career Link Center's ability to leverage a moderate amount of funding for quite a large scale of operation. The success can be attributed to the strong partnership that took place, even before the enactment of the WIA. The following features have also made the Career Link Centers extremely user friendly to job-seekers:

Swipe Card System

One of the unique features of the Career Link Centers is the use of the swipe card system to register clients and track their activities. At the point of registration, job-seekers fill out their information in the swipe cards system that looks like those used by the supermarkets. When returning to the centers, the swipe cards identify the individuals and track the services they use. The system allows staff to match clients' skills and interests with job orders instantaneously. It also assists staff to collect data on program activities and client demographic information for reports required by the Work Force Investment Board. The reports typically describe the total number of customer visits for the month, job placements secured, and services used (categorized in up to 54 types). Clients' profiles collected include education level, skills and experiences, ethnicity, language, age, employment status, and type of benefits they receive.

I discovered during the visit that the swipe cards also enable DHS staff to collect participation hours for mandatory customers such as CalWORKs or PAE clients. DHS CalWORKs policies and procedures, for example, accept CalWORKs clients' participation in self-directed activities. Whenever a client uses one daily swipe in a week; he/she receives credit for job search activities that is equivalent to 1-5 of participation hours. Some CalWORKs clients participate in training activities or work part-time, although CalWORKs participation rules usually require them to participate in at least 32-hour per week in work-related or job search activities. The swipe card system allows clients to use the career center hours to supplement their training or work hours at a time and location that are convenient to the individuals. The same benefit applies to single aided adults.

Menu of Services and Monthly Workshop/Event Schedule

A list of services, along with a monthly schedule, is available at the centers, letting job-seekers know when the workshop and events are held and whether they can walk in or should call a certain number to pre-register. Activities include:

- Workshops on job search strategies, resume writing, interview techniques
- Computer training on word processing, e-mail, internet
- Career counseling and vocational assessment sessions
- Job skills testing
- Other services, such as introduction to available free training, tax credit and income tax preparation assistance

The free of charge supervised children's playroom and On-site Children Drop Off is essential for some job-seekers.

One Source and San Francisco Build Connection

Another unique quality of the Career Link is that all the contractors of the City and County of San Francisco who receive \$200,000 in annual contractual dollars are required to list all their job openings with the one-stop centers. These employment listings are called "First Source" positions. In a similar manner, contractors of the City and County of San Francisco building contracts are required to post all job openings under the "City Build" ordinance.

Consortium Structure

Beside the physical set up, the commitment of the partners is also evident in the way the consortium set up its structure. As mentioned earlier, the DHS Workforce Development Division serves to coordinate the linkage among the Career Link centers. A significant portion of the budget has provided a few key staffing positions, including two managers who oversee the daily activities of the Career Link Centers. These few individuals also assist the lead agency in compiling data and reports on the Career Link Centers. The Deputy Director of the Workforce Division, in his capacity as the coordinator of the project, reports and makes recommendations to the Operations Committee which is comprised of the partnering agencies' Directors.

How the Career Link Services Model has Benefited DHS' CalWORKs and PAE Clients

One additional lesson that I learned from the San Francisco model is how DHS, once having become a successful leader in the creation of the Career Link One-Stop, has used the centers to enhance services to its welfare-to-work customers – the CalWORKs and PAES (single adult) clients, who as a condition of receiving aid, are mandated to participate in employment and training related activities.

The DHS Workforce Division, which also manages the overall employment services for the City and County of San Francisco welfare populations, has set up its Employment Centers for welfare recipients in a similar manner as the Career Link Center. There are multiple partners and program services at DHS offices, so clients can register with the swipe card and be introduced to the job search and career center concept from the very beginning of receiving cash aid. These welfare clients are encouraged to

visit the Career Link Centers for some of their workshop activities. The general job-seekers can also use the DHS offices' Career Centers. It is worth noting that in order to enhance employment services for single adults, DHS invests the Federal Food Stamp Employment Services into its Work Force Investment Division, and so the single adult clients can participate in the Career Centers.

Welfare clients who use the Career Link services side by side with the general job-seekers are exposed to the job search environment that is not restricted to the welfare offices, and can be assured that the potential employers do not automatically know that they are currently on public assistance.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SANTA CLARA COUNTY

It will be harder to duplicate the same operation in Santa Clara County, as Santa Clara County lacks the same favorable external factors, such as a good public transportation as well as a more diversified economic structure. The separate management systems have also existed for a while since the enactment of the two acts in 1986 and 1998; and all programs seem efficient in reaching their desired employment outcomes and program objectives as separate entities. But if one party, like Social Services Agency, will lead local employment/training partners in forming a consortium to apply for WIA funding, such as the one in San Francisco, it could mean a start for a cross-over services.

Learning from the San Francisco consortium, there is a possibility that SSA and some of its employment/training partners could develop a similar approach in partnering for WIA funding. As in the San Francisco model, a persistent approach and willingness to lead other partners may be necessary.

SSA's CalWORKs already has a strong, collaborative relationship with the employment and training community partners, and sophisticated set-up for its ECC. It is possible that SSA's CalWORKs Employment Services and General Assistance can team up with other community partners to try to acquire WIA funds. Such a move may benefit the entire employment/training system, and can make more services and facilities available across the board to the aided clients, low-income families, and the general job-seekers.

What Santa Clara can also learn from San Francisco is creativity in funding use. The City/County of San Francisco utilizes the Food Stamp Employment allocation to integrate the single aided adults into the Career Link System. Santa Clara may be able to do so as well so General Assistance clients, the single-aided adults, can more readily access employment services.

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