

Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) Nested Inside County Human Services Agencies: Maximizing Opportunities and Outcomes

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) that are “nested” inside county human services agencies realize an abundance of cost-saving and operational advantages that other organizational structures (e.g. private non-profits) do not offer when it comes to managing indirect and overhead services and expenses, such as human resources (HR) and employee benefits concerns, liability and worker’s compensation insurance, facility maintenance, and information technology (IT) support. Although all WIBs incur these expenses regardless of their structure, nested WIBs are able to use a proportionately smaller amount of their Workforce Investment Act (WIA) allocations to pay for them because of the cost claiming processes, the rules governing the human services agencies in which they reside, and their proportionately minute contribution of formula-allocated WIA funds to their parent agency budgets (typically 1–2% of total revenue).

Taking into consideration the costs, obligations, and responsibilities that accompany the administration of WIA funds, county human services agencies with nested WIBs inevitably have a vested interest in leveraging and maximizing the resources within their WIBs to benefit other programs, especially as CalWORKs/Welfare-to-Work (WTW) programs potentially face substantial financial penalties for not meeting newly required Work Participation Rate (WPR) measures. This report explores how three other local nested WIBs (Alameda, San Mateo, and Sonoma Counties) have structured the administration, management, staffing, and oversight of WIA funded programs and services under their purview and the different ways in which they are leveraging the multiplicity of resources within their host agency to do the work efficiently and effectively so that it supports both program-specific and agency-wide outcomes.

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Background

In the days before the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), funding for job training programs was relatively abundant. Under the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), some counties actually had stand alone departments—at that time called Private Industry Councils (PICs)—that administered employment and training programs. When WIA was enacted in 1998 and funding for job training programs was continuing to shrink, this forced consolidation of these departments underneath larger county organizations. In Contra Costa County, this process played itself out as the local PIC was folded into the Employment and Human Services Department (EHSD) in 2000, and since that time EHSD has been serving as the parent agency for the county’s WIB, whose legal appellation is the Workforce Development Board (WDB) of Contra Costa County. While the PIC’s assimilation into EHSD was a bit of a struggle at first, over time this has helped to improve administrative and operational efficiencies, including management of personnel, fiscal, contracting, facilities, and IT issues. While beyond the specific focus of this endeavor, it is worth noting that similar histories define the experiences of several other Bay Area counties that currently have nested WIBs, including Alameda, San Mateo, and Sonoma, and that some of the reasons that no county human services agency has perfectly integrated its WIA funded programs and services into its other programs and services are rooted in their historical contexts. An additional

noteworthy factor that has inhibited nested WIBs from more fully assimilating into their parent organizations is that they must operate under the policy oversight of external boards, creating multiple sets of reporting and governing relationships that are unlike most traditional social service programs.

The WDB of Contra Costa County is a 37 member, business-led public body responsible for coordinating workforce development policy and overseeing Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funded programs and services in the county (excluding the City of Richmond). As described on its website,¹ the WDB helps develop a strong, vibrant economy and workforce by providing the tools that strengthen individuals, businesses, and the community at large. The WDB also oversees various workforce and youth development services offered across the county in conjunction with partnering agencies and organizations. Like their counterparts, all WDB members are appointed by the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors, a process which generally gives WIBs a more visible role as a division or unit within their respective agencies.

By virtue of the regulations and guidelines spelled out in the WIA, the WIBs of Alameda, San Mateo, and Sonoma counties each have functions and responsibilities that are very similar to the WDB of Contra Costa County, including program oversight, policy development, capacity and system

¹Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County, retrieved April 28, 2008 from <http://www.wdbccc.com/about.htm>

building, resource development, and its members are similarly appointed to serve by their respective county's Board of Supervisors. Some fundamental language describing their work includes "promoting an integrated and innovative workforce development system,"² "providing tools, resources, and services to assist with employment and business goals,"³ and "to set policy for the workforce system in coordination with statewide efforts."⁴

WIB Configurations

Despite clear similarities between the missions, visions, and mandates of each WIB, their respective organizational, board, and committee structures differ in a few important respects. Unlike the manner in which they are staffed and operate on a day-to-day basis, the configurations of the WIBs are not in any way dependent upon or directly linked to the organization of the county's respective human services agency.

As shown in Table 1, each of the three WIBs listed above have Executive Committees and Youth Councils (the latter of which are required by law); somewhat unsurprisingly, a more in depth review of these committees' roles and functions revealed more similarities than differences. Further study also revealed a fair degree of similarity between the roles and responsibilities of Alameda County's Workforce Systems Committee, San Mateo County's Performance Standards Committee, and Sonoma County's Job Link Advisory Committee. However, despite the similarity in their respective structures, the scope, breadth, and depth of information that is provided to each of these WIBs and their committees appeared to vary considerably. For example, Alameda County provides more than forty pages of reports of program performance and financial (budget) information in their WIB meeting packets, while both San Mateo

TABLE 1
Size and Committee Structures of
Nested Bay Area WIBs

County/ LWIA	Board Size	Committees
Alameda	32	Four (4): Executive, Youth, Workforce Systems, Economic Development
San Mateo	29	Four (4): Executive, Youth, Performance Standards, Board Development
Sonoma	45	Three (3): Executive, Youth, Job Link Steering Committee Additional: <i>ad hoc</i> committees (2 active as of April 2008)

and Sonoma Counties have considerably shorter but highly informative dashboard-style reports that they present to their respective membership. Regardless of the variances between each of them, each of the three WIBs were noteworthy for having high-quality and user-friendly reports clearly delineating progress and performance against salient program indicators and outcomes.

Nested WIB Integration into Parent Human Services Agency

STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS

Although all three counties that were examined through this project have nested WIBs, there were remarkable variances between each of them in terms of their level of integration into their respective county agency. San Mateo and Sonoma Counties appear to have a relatively high level of integration with other parts of their agency, both on the administrative and programmatic side. Conversely, in Alameda County, the WIB operates somewhat more independently, with discrete staff that has sole responsibility for the oversight of budget and contracting aspects of WIA funded programs. Much of this would appear to result from the fact that Alameda Social Services Agency is a vast agency, with staffing and budget levels three to four times its counterparts, making intradepartmental communication (much less coordination of programs and services) a more formidable task.

²San Mateo County Workforce Investment Board, retrieved April 28, 2008 from http://www.co.sanmateo.ca.us/smc/department/hsa/home/0,,34524673_34557620_35066849,00.html

³Alameda County Workforce Investment Board, retrieved April 28, 2008 from <http://www.acwib.org/>

⁴Sonoma County Workforce Investment Board bylaws, retrieved April 28, 2008 from <http://www.sonomawib.org/documents/WIBBylaws2006.pdf>

As evidenced in Table 2, Alameda County's WIB, whose director reports to the Alameda County Social Services Agency (SSA) Director, has the highest level of autonomy within its parent human services agency structure and the lowest level of integration of all three WIBs that were reviewed as part of this study. In addition to the previously referenced size and scope of Alameda SSA that makes integration of its WIB into the larger agency a more formidable endeavor, another reason for the WIB's relative autonomy is that none of the WIA-funded programs and services in Alameda County is operated by SSA staff (the only exception is the Eden Area One Stop in Hayward, the operations for which will be assumed by an outside contractor as of 7/1/08), providing fewer conditions for its work to cross into SSA as a whole.

Conversely, in both San Mateo and Sonoma Counties, there is a much higher degree of integration on both the administrative level, much of which is supported by having strong linkages at the programmatic level. For example, in San Mateo County, several components of and services provided within their Peninsula Works One Stop Career Centers are highly integrated and leveraged with the Human Services Agency's (HSA) CalWORKs/WTW programs. This same level of connectivity exists on the administrative side, as both the Workforce Development Manager (WIB Director) and the CalWORKs/WTW Manager report to the HSA Director of Self-Sufficiency, requiring that both programs work collaboratively on specific projects and areas of common interest and benefit. In Sonoma County, there is an even higher level of integration between its WIA and CalWORKs/WTW programs and services, as one person/position is responsible for the administrative side of both the county's CalWORKs/WTW services and the WIB (the Sonoma County Human Services Department's Employment & Training Division Director doubles as the Sonoma WIB Director), a structure which exists primarily because of the more manageable size and scale of Sonoma County's WIA and CalWORKs programs. While Sonoma County's model is prob-

TABLE 2
Integration of Nested Bay Area WIBs
with Human Services Agencies

County/ LWIA	Administrative Integration	Programmatic Integration
Alameda	Low	Low
San Mateo	Moderate/High	High
Sonoma	High	High

ably not replicable in Contra Costa County, the benefits of this arrangement are readily apparent; a review of the Sonoma County HSD Employment & Training Division's budget and its programs revealed that many services for both CalWORKs/WTW and WIA are integrated both operationally and financially, providing a broader and deeper range of services for job seeker customers from both groups.

FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE ELEMENTS

The aforementioned integration of WIA and CalWORKs administrative and programmatic elements allows for operational efficiencies and advantages that provide nested WIBs with resources beyond what they received through their direct funding allocation. Indirect costs (payroll & benefits, insurance, IT, etc.) are greatly reduced by virtue of the costs being spread out to other parts of a much larger human services agency budget (as is clear from the Table 3) and allows WIBs to save scarce WIA dollars while maintaining a proportionately more robust staffing capacity to support the programs they fund.

In reviewing the data in Table 3 (following page), it should be noted that Alameda WIB has a larger number of FTEs because of their relatively autonomous position within SSA, while San Mateo and Sonoma have fewer administrative staff because they effectively leverage other parts of their agencies for support.

Implications for Contra Costa County

Exploring three nested Bay Area WIBs affords ample opportunities to compare and contrast their operations with the system currently in place in Contra Costa County. Below are some of the essen-

TABLE 3
WIB/LWIA Allocations and WIB (Administrative) Staffing Levels

County	FTEs (Admin.)	2007-2008 WIA Allocation ⁵				Total WIA	% of Agency Budget
		Adult	Youth	DW	RR		
Alameda	16	\$1,486,514	\$1,589,485	\$2,174,684	\$475,749	\$5,726,432	0.9%
San Mateo	5	\$ 939,753	\$ 924,707	\$1,250,889	\$411,430	\$3,526,779	1.4%
Sonoma	4	\$ 602,668	\$ 646,543	\$ 888,642	\$199,849	\$2,337,702	1.7%

tial findings and suggestions for further exploration and consideration:

Recommendation 1: *Explore opportunities to increase horizontal integration of WDB administrative staff with other EHSD policy and research units on areas of larger interest to the department (e.g. sector strategy work) to ensure broader programmatic benefits beyond WIA.*

The administrative units of the San Mateo and Sonoma County WIBs are highly integrated into their respective agency's structure. Although the structures within these two counties are very different, they share common ground in their efforts to realize significant economies of scale in their research, planning, employer and business outreach, and other associated efforts by linking them more closely with their respective CalWORKs/WTW programs, and they have done this while preserving the independent roles of the WIB itself. For example, in Sonoma County, while the WIB's advisory/oversight and capacity-building role obviously revolves around their WIA-funded programs, other HSD employment services programs are also part of their consciousness, including some elements supporting CalWORKs/WtW. Another example of an effective program is San Mateo County's nationally-acclaimed biotech program, which was initially developed to help dislocated workers (primarily airline mechanics) transition into high-wage, high-skill jobs in the biotech industry; over time, this program was expanded as its WIB developed "bridge" programs in partnership

with the local community college system. The addition of this component enabled San Mateo County to expand its services to include HSA clients in other (non-WIA) programs, such as CalWORKs and foster care, and provide them with an opportunity to remediate their English and math skills in contextualized learning environments so that they could enroll in subsequent biotech program cohorts. One of the main reasons San Mateo County was able to do this was that they maximized their leverage of internal (WIA and CalWORKs) funds and resources, while also finding external (grant) funds to support related aspects of this work.

Recommendation 2: *Develop formal processes for sharing and securing resources from multiple funding streams (e.g. linking WIA and CalWORKs funding, bundling WIA Youth dollars with ILSP services), particularly for program and/or capacity building services provided by outside contractors.*

Although each of the three WIBs reviewed for this project has distinct differences in how they operate within their respective agencies, all of them work collaboratively with their partner CalWORKs program to obtain and deploy resources for mutual benefit. For example, within the past few years, Alameda WIB accessed TANF incentive funds because it provided services to a large number of CalWORKs customers in their One Stops. San Mateo and Sonoma Counties have developed and deployed programs and services under contract bundling both WIA and CalWORKs funds using a clearly delineated process that ensures proportionate benefit to (and expense against) each program and funding stream. San Mateo County has also been effective in using its WIA

⁵California Employment Development Department, retrieved April 28, 2008 from <http://www.edd.ca.gov/wiarep/wiab06-60.pdf> and <http://www.edd.ca.gov/wiarep/wiab06-65.pdf>

Youth funds to help support programs and services to emancipating foster youth in their Independent Living Program.

Recommendation 3: *Increase and enhance reporting output to provide greater depth and breadth of information about key indicators and outcomes achieved by programs & services funded by the WDB of Contra Costa County.*

The WIA-funded workforce system construct provides an abundance of opportunities to record, track, and measure various indicators and outcomes. Between the forty-plus pages of programmatic and financial reports that the Alameda WIB staff provide to its board to the more pared down dashboard-style reports used by San Mateo and Sonoma Counties, it's clear that there is no one-size-fits-all model to report generation and dissemination. In comparison to other nested Bay Area WIBs, however, it's clear that Contra Costa County can do much more work to enhance the depth and breadth of its reports. For example, Alameda County's WIB publishes a monthly report comparing the residency of new One Stop members against the local unemployment rate, while Sonoma County produces a very straightforward quarterly report against WIA performance measures and other key outcomes, such as average placement wage. Alameda County's WIB also generates performance reports at the contractor level for its youth providers, something that Contra Costa County's WDB actually recently moved away from. In short, improving the variety, content, and frequency of reports to the WDB membership will enable them to gain a deeper understanding of the work that they are doing to fulfill their mission to "promote a workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses, job seekers, and workers to ensure a strong, vibrant economy" and provide them with a clearer picture in the rearview mirror as they plan for the future.

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