

Work Participation Rate and Internal Marketing: A Look at Santa Clara County

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Deficit Reduction Act (DRA) of 2005 reauthorized the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program of 1996. The reauthorization had stricter guidelines, raising the CalWORKS Work Participation Rate (WPR) performance bar without changing expected outcomes. The stricter guidelines included WPR measures for clients previously excluded, timed out, and sanctioned over 90 days. These stricter guidelines have a direct correlation of reducing WPR results, increasing the challenge of states to meet the required All Family WPR of 50%.

One way that Santa Clara County has responded to meeting the challenge of the WPR requirement is by implementing a variety of internal marketing strategies to potentially enhance the WPR. The core marketing strategies are communication, collaboration, and staff development.

This case study examines some of the innovative strategies utilized and makes implementation recommendations to Contra Costa County.

It is suggested that Contra Costa County implement and adopt relevant practices that may help increase the WPR and avoid financial sanctions.

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Introduction

The value of internal marketing has long been recognized by private sector companies, such as Nordstrom and Southwest Airlines, to increase employee performance and services to their customers. (See Figure 1.)

With the reauthorization of TANF (Temporary Aid to Needy Families) under the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 counties throughout California are struggling to meet the new CalWORKS WPR (Work Participation Rate). The reauthorization has much stricter guidelines without changing the required outcomes. To further illustrate, in order for states to avoid financial sanctions they must have an All Families WPR of 50%; California's WPR projections to date are 22%.

In this case study, the goal has been to examine some of the internal marketing strategies that Santa Clara County is utilizing to enhance its R and make appropriate recommendations for Contra Costa County.

Santa Clara County Background

The Department of Employment & Benefits Services (DEBS) is the largest department within the Santa Clara County Social Service Agency, consisting of 48.7% of the agency's total staff and 45.7% of the agency's budget. (See Figure 2, following page.)

The department serves 14,054 clients on CalWORKS, and, of these clients, 6,553 participate in CalWORKS Employment Services.

Within DEBS there has been a history of disconnect between services provided by Employment and Benefits (the two sides of the house). Current Administrators, Jan Piclorich, Assistant DEBS Di-

FIGURE 1
Internal Marketing

Definition of Internal Marketing (IM): An ongoing process that occurs strictly within a company or organization whereby the functional process aligns, motivates, and empowers employees at all levels to consistently deliver a satisfying customer experience.

Benefits of IM include:

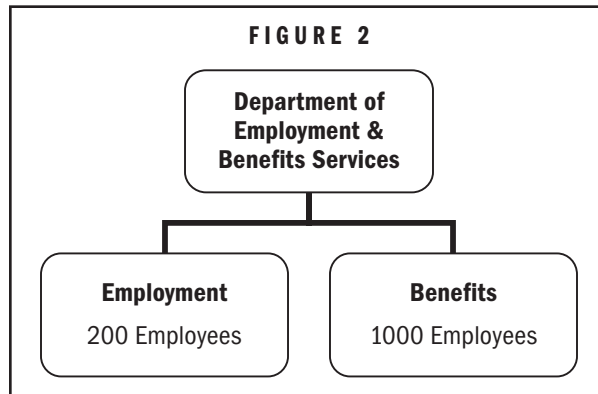
- IM encourages employees to perform better
- IM empowers employees and gives them accountability and responsibility
- IM creates common understanding of the business organization
- IM encourages employees to offer superb services to clients by appreciating their valuable contribution to the success of the business
- IM improves customers retention and individual employee development
- IM integrates business culture, structure, human resources management, vision and strategy with the employee's professional and social needs.
- IM creates good coordination and cooperation among departments of the business⁴

rector, and Denise Boland, Employment Services Administrator, are committed to the unification of DEBS. The internal marketing strategies discussed in this case-study reflect their mission of uniting the departments to best serve the clients and enhance the WPR.

WPR Track Record

Santa Clara County has proactively tracked its WPR since 1988 and has good results. As discussed with Denise Boland, Employment Service Administrator, tracking WPR is not new to Santa Clara County. Under DRA 2005 meeting the WPR has brought new challenges. (See Table 1, following page.)

⁴Wikipedia.com



In looking at this data, it is important to note that while the TANF reauthorization/Deficit Reduction Act 2005 became effective on October 1, 2006, it allowed states a one year implementation period up to October 1, 2007.

The impact of the new changes (i.e., inclusion of clients sanctioned over 90 days and timed out/safety net) is clearly seen in the chart below that contrasts the new and old formulas. (See Table 2.)

Internal Marketing Strategies

The stricter guidelines of the Deficit Reduction Act 2005, has resulted in counties looking for creative/innovative ways to avoid financial sanctions that result from not meeting the WPR.

TABLE 1
Average WPR FY (Fiscal year: October-September) 2004-2008²

Raw Data				
2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
49.32%	48.53%	48.43%	29.53%	32.81%

TABLE 2
Santa Clara WPR—New and Old Formula³

	Old Formula*	New Formula	Percent Safety Net	Percent Sanctioned
10/06	51.49%	34.49%	5%	12%
11/06	48.09%	36.09%	4%	8%
12/06	52.02%	33.42%	9%	9.6%
Average	50.53%	34.66%	6%	9.8%

*Excludes Sanction & Safety Net Cases

²Memo 2/1/2008. From Raul Aldana to Denise Boland

³Employment Services Bureau Annual Report 10/07

WPR STEERING COMMITTEE

At the foundation of Santa Clara County's internal marketing strategy is the establishment of the WPR Steering Committee and the six associated work groups. The WPR Committee was formed in late 2006 with a mission to develop, revise, and implement collaborative efforts between DEBS Eligibility and Employment Services operations to improve performance, communication, and services in the Welfare To Work (WTW) areas of: engagement, participation, entered employment, and earnings.⁴

The steering committee members consist of approximately 20 managers and supervisors from Employment and Eligibility representing all offices. Within this management group, key members serve as WPR Liaisons, whose responsibility it is to educate staff and share information. The Steering Committee meets twice a month, and the meetings are usually facilitated by Denise Boland, Employment Services Bureau Administrator and Jan Picolorich, Assistant DEBS Director. The meetings are run in a very democratic and interactive style that is conducive to brainstorming. They are a good open forum for discussion with active participation.

WORK TEAMS

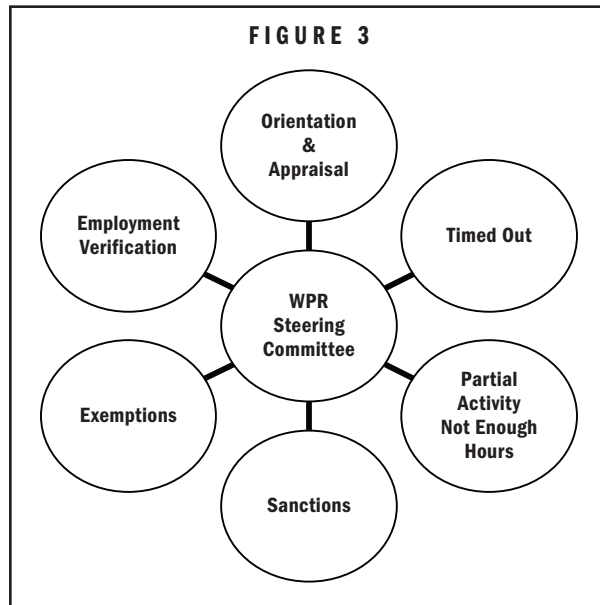
As a result of needs assessment within DEBS six cross departmental work teams were formed in November 2007. Each of these teams focus on an area that has adversely affected the WPR. (See Figure 3.)

For the most part, each workgroup is composed of 8–10 members consisting of management and line staff from both employment and benefits. Each group has a charter with tangible desired outcomes and timelines. The oversight of the workgroups is the key responsibility of the Steering Committee. In addition to the work groups, additional special project/ad-hoc workgroups are formed as needed.

WPR POWERPOINT

As an internal tool to assist staff in keeping up with the many WPR changes, a sub-committee of the WPR Steering Committee took the lead in Decem-

⁴WPR Steering Committee Agenda 4/4/2008



ber 2007 to develop a PowerPoint presentation entitled, The Work Participation Rate—Commonly Known as WPR. In a straight forward message, this presentation outlines:

- What the WPR is
- Goals, present performance, challenges, and possible financial sanctions
- How both Employment & Benefits Staff can work together to improve the WPRAs with other projects taken on by WPR Steering Committee, and sub committees, (this project was presented and approved by the Steering Committee prior to distribution).

Managers and Supervisors were assigned the task of presenting and discussing the presentation at their Unit meetings by February 2008. To ensure broad access to the presentation, it was also posted on the county intranet. The feedback received by managers, supervisors, and from staff was very positive.

ROADSHOW

Encouraged by the positive feedback from the WPR PowerPoint presentation, the WPR Steering Committee decided to expand the outreach to staff. Currently a sub-committee is working on an innovative and interactive WPR staff development activity entitled.

The Roadshow has three elements to it:

- Update and expand the WPR PowerPoint. This will include more statistical performance information, goals with timelines (for example, increase WPR by 3% every quarter), and strategies to accomplish goals
- Use Icebreakers. DEBS staff from all levels will be invited to the Roadshow. Upon arrival they will self identify their position and select a colored name tag representative of their job class. Participants will then circulate through the room and form groups of approximately 15 people with no more than two in each group of the same job class. Each group will then discuss with each other what they do and the first two groups who complete the icebreaker will participate in the WPR-T-FACT Game
- Introduce WPR-T-FACT GAME. In a game show format (with similarities to Monopoly), the teams will compete in answering WPR related questions and questions about services that DEBS offers. Staff who are not in one of the competing teams will serve as the audience and will also have opportunities to interact when one of the competing teams chooses to, “ask the audience”.

The Roadshow will debut on April 28, 2008, and will occur 5 other times through May 7 2008, each time with about 150 staff attending. A sneak preview will take place at the WPR Steering Committee on April 18, 2008, where final details will be “ironed out.” One of the challenges in developing this creative program seems to be the time that members of the Steering Committee can commit. As reinforcement to the importance of WPR, Jan Picolorich and Denise Boland accepted to head this project. It is anticipated that having the Assistant DEBS Director and the Employment Services Bureau Administrator facilitate this project will have additional impact on staff of the critical nature of WPR. It is also significant that this workshop is for the entire DEBS, because in the past most of the training has been in separate silos for Employment and Benefits Services. Staff attendance will not be mandatory for this activity, although the goal is that at least 50% of DEBS

staff will attend. The emphasis will be on having fun while learning, and the staff will have the opportunity to be off site from their office and mingle with colleagues from various departments.

SIGNAGE

To help motivate staff and to keep goals and various programs in the forefront of their mind, DEBS utilizes various types of signage throughout its buildings. Banners, signs, and pictures are strategically placed.

- Banners with the slogan, We Make a Difference through People, Service, Performance, are placed throughout the DEBS buildings. This slogan, has become the mantra of the department, found not only on the banners but in various publications, memos, etc. In early 2007 this slogan was developed by members of the Employment Management Team and was soon adopted as a unifying message within DEBS for both the Employment and Benefits departments.
- To help keep staff well informed of the county WPR statistical performance, plans are being developed to post throughout DEBS buildings graphs or a WPR thermometer. Implementation should occur within the next few months.
- Celebrating and publicizing the success of CalWORKS clients is not only meaningful to the client, but also is indicative to staff that their hard work has paid off. For the past 17 years, DEBS has hosted an annual Client Awards ceremony. Typically DEBS receives 60–80 nominations from both staff and partnering service providers. DEBS and its partners are then responsible for ranking the nominations, and designating the top 10 that will receive awards. The ceremony also makes awards to the Employer of the Year and a featured Community Partner. Pictures and plaques are displayed throughout the year in DEBS buildings. It is interesting to note that last year was the first year that Benefit Services was involved in this ceremony. It is indicative of the effort to unify the two sides of the DEBS house.

PUBLICATIONS

There are two publications that are produced each year that focus on CalWORKS; ESI (Santa Clara County CalWORKS/Employment Support Initiative), and the Employment Services Bureau—Annual Report. Each of these reports is designed to update the reader on CalWORKS. The two reports are designed for distribution to the community, internal staff, community partners, and the Board of Supervisors. The articles include both narrative stories as well as statistical data. ESI is published in the Spring, and the Annual Report is published in the Fall. As a result CalWorks updates are published on a semi-annual basis. DEBS considered having one annual publication, but with all the changes in WTW it was determined that information could be shared in a more timely manner semi-annually. The DEBS, publications are available to staff on the intranet. Managers and supervisors are also asked to review these publications with their staff at unit meetings. DEBS mails out approximately 150 copies of the publications in order to share the information with community partners.

CALWORKS ADVISORY COUNCIL

This meeting takes place on a monthly basis, and is attended by selected DEBS staff and its partners; Community Based Organizations and Educational programs. The meeting provides a forum to discuss CalWorks updates and support services. This meeting is facilitated by Denise Boland, and seems to be an excellent venue for sharing information and resources. The support services that many of these organizations offer CalWORKS clients are in reality extensions of DEBS services. The impact from the services have a direct correlation to the WPR and highlight the necessity of keeping partnering agencies well abreast of changes in WPR/CalWORKS. It is because of the close intertwining of agencies that this meeting is referenced in this paper as an extension of internal marketing.

CALWORKS 101

A seminar is available to Partnering agencies as well as DEBS staff. This three hour seminar is facilitated

by a designated staff member of DEBS, with the purpose of presenting up to date information on CalWORKS and supportive services. The workshop is offered at various times every other month.

CALWORKS RESOURCE FAIR

The resource fair is scheduled for April 21, 2008. The intent of this event is for DEBS staff and Partnering agencies to learn more about one another and the services offered to CalWorks clients. Partnering agencies and programs within DEBS will have information tables in order to share information with one another.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The WPR challenge has raised the importance of having staff well trained and vested in CalWORKS. Santa Clara County has been creative in the internal marketing strategies implemented. A central theme of unification is at the core of these strategies. This has involved changes in the infrastructure of DEBS in order to unify the two sides of the house. It is clear that the momentum is coming from upper management. Priority, however, has been to involve staff at all levels. In order to be inclusive of all staff and maximize the benefits of strategies used, DEBS strategies involve using a variety of learning modalities: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. The marketing strategies covered in this case study are for the most part new and in some cases are pending implementation; therefore, outcome data is not yet available. From a fiscal point of view the primary cost of these strategies seems to be staff time. Ancillary costs are minimal including: printing, mailing, and miscellaneous supplies. The two counties (Contra Costa & Santa Clara) have similar organizational structures, and face similar challenges. Contra Costa County appreciates the innovative internal marketing strategies that Santa Clara County has developed to meet the new WPR challenge. In reviewing Santa Clara's strategies, I believe that these strategies could be adopted by Contra Costa County without significant costs or organizational changes. It is recommended that Contra Costa County implement a three-stage plan over the next year.

Stage One:

- WPR PowerPoint
- WPR Steering Committee
- CalWorks 101

Stage Two:

- CalWORKS Advisory Council
- Publications
- Signage

Stage Three:

- Roadshow
- Resource Fair

Next Steps

Contra Costa County is already looking at creating a WPR PowerPoint. It is also recommended that Contra Costa County implement WPR as a standing agenda item at both the CalWORKS Program Committee and the Welfare to Work Committee.

In order to potentially implement the recommended strategies, the following formal steps must be followed.

- Present to WFS(Work Force Services) Bureau Director
- Prioritize Strategies
- Gain buy-in from Division Managers
- Form workgroups/committees

Both counties are committed to quality client service and case management. The commitment by dedicated staff is what will ultimately lead to achieving WPR goals.

Acknowledgements

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