Government Workers Adding Societal Value: The Ohio Workforce Development Program

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ABSTRACT

This case study illustrates the application of Mega—adding measurable value for all stakeholders including society—as the central and ultimate focus for needs assessment. In this case, two needs assessment studies were conducted within a five-year period (1999-2003) with the State of Ohio's Workforce Development (WD) program. An initial needs assessment based on Mega outcomes—high quality of life for Ohio taxpayers and public employees though the services they provide—was conducted in 1999, identifying shared strategic goals to focus management-labor partnership initiatives. A Mega-centered data collection matrix was used as the basis for discussions with stakeholders in order to determine the key areas of Ohio's Workforce Development to be included in the study. In 2003, a follow-up needs assessment based on the same data collection matrix was designed to determine the improvements made since that time, the areas with the most critical performance gaps, demographic changes, and future trends affecting Workforce Development beneficiaries and stakeholders.

Introduction

The Workforce Development (WD) program is a joint labor-management partnership established by the State of Ohio and the Ohio Civil Service Employee Association (OSCEA)/American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Local 11 with the purpose of providing education and training opportunities for eligible State of Ohio bargaining unit employees. The WD program involves multiple education and training interventions directly linked to addressing societal needs with the ultimate goal of enabling public sector employees to continue adding measurable value to their communities. This societal—Mega—outcome is improving the quality of life of Ohio taxpayers, and was to be accomplished through responsive services provided by each state agency, as well as through programs promoting employment security for state employees. Employ-

ment security is based on developing valuable competencies that increase promotability and employability, creating effective opportunities for job advancement, and thus, increased quality of life. Because WD's concept of job security went beyond the traditional concept of job security, which suggests a secured position without regard to advancement, it required a focus on societal and stakeholders' present and future needs.

Needs Assessment

Needs assessments can be useful tools for identifying what is working and what is not within even the most complex of organizations. Through systematic data collection, the assessment process can provide decision makers with essential facts and figures, as well as pragmatic information, for guiding essential decisions regarding promising opportunities and rising pressures for initiatives that can adequately address the needs—gaps in results and consequences—of the organization and its partners. By defining the gaps between current and desired results (i.e., needs) a needs assessment can provide the justification for identifying and choosing the ways and means to close those gaps (be it basic skills development, technical and computer skills, tuition assistance, workplace redesign, or management and policy implications).

For organizations, like Ohio's Workforce Development, that provide a comprehensive program of workforce education initiatives, needs assessment is an essential tool. Needs assessment provides results-referenced data, creating effective strategic plans, and making challenging decisions that must be responsive to the ever-changing environment and requirements of state agencies as well as adding value for Residents of Ohio, union members, and Ohio government.

Background

In November of 1998, Workforce Development began its first needs assessment initiative in order to better determine the emerging requirements of eligible state bargaining unit employees to ensure the investment made by OCSEA and the State of Ohio would bring maximum value to all residents of Ohio. At the conclusion of this first needs assessment, four primary recommendations were made to address identified needs. These recommendations provided a baseline for the 2003 assessment, later described, and are listed below:

Strategic Alignment: While individual initiatives had clear objectives and benefits to either eligible state bargaining unit employees or the state agency, the alignment of Workforce Development with the State of Ohio strategic plan, individual agency plans, and the goals and objectives of the OCSEA was not always clear to those individuals who participated in the needs assessment. This recommendation was to link the Workforce Development planning, management, implementation, and results to value added for all residents of Ohio.

Systemic Communications Plan: Further improved flow of communication at all levels could well assist in the overcoming of many of Workforce Development's obstacles. Better dissemination of information to agency offices outside of Columbus as well as enhanced relationships between educational advocates, eligible state bargaining unit em-

ployees, and agency managers could have been accomplished through a systemic communications plan. By coordinating these communication issues, the Workforce Development organization and the State of Ohio agencies both stood to gain.

Flexible and Responsive Initiatives: The desire for OCSEA members to obtain new skills and contribute value added to their workplace was obvious during the needs assessment. Employees often faced challenges in meeting these desires due to conflicting work responsibilities, requirements for family participation, and/or a lack of access to programs that were of value to their organization and the career path (especially for OCSEA members outside of Columbus). The growing availability of distance education programs that offer job skills and degree programs to individuals regardless of their location may assist in resolving a substantial portion of these obstacles. Programs that offer courses both during working hours (for those who can obtain release time) as well as evening courses (for those whose responsibilities do not allow for release time) were also recommended alternatives.

Release of eligible state bargaining unit employees to attend education and training programs: While other barriers to success were evident during the needs assessment, the lack of standardization and frequent unavailability of release time for individuals wishing to participate in Workforce Development initiatives were among the most prevalent. Several individuals during the needs assessment offered flextime schedules as a possible solution, while others suggested flexible

scheduling of educational and training activities so that activities are available when the eligible bargaining unit employee is available (e.g., more night and weekend activities). Resolving this issue should have been among the highest priority objectives of Workforce Development.

In 2003, Ohio's WD asked an external consulting team to conduct a needs assessment for their organization as a follow-up to the previous assessment. The 2003 assessment set out to accomplish three objectives:

- Evaluate the progress being made by Workforce Development initiatives in achieving the goals established in the 1999 assessment;
- Determine how recent changes in the economic, demographic, and policy climate have altered the desired directions for current and future Workforce Development initiatives;
- Examine future trends that were likely to significantly impact Workforce Development's strategic plan.

Areas of Focus for the 2003 Needs Assessment

The 2003 needs assessment was structured to verify and validate the continuing and emerging needs (i.e., gaps between what should be accomplished and what is currently being accomplished; Kaufman, 1998, 2000) of WD through input from eligible state bargaining unit employees, State of Ohio agency representatives, OSCEA leadership, and Educational Advocates. While the data specific points collected in the 2003 assessment were expanded, the baseline focal points used as drivers

for the 1999 assessment were again applied in the planning of the assessment. In meetings jointly held between the consulting team, WD, OCSEA, and State of Ohio representatives, the focus areas for the 2003 needs assessment were mutually defined and accepted. A sample of the driving elements is listed below:

- *Availability* of WD programs
- *Quality* of WD programs and services
- WD *Policies*
- Appropriateness of WD programs *resources*
- *Opportunity costs* associated with participating in WD programs
- *Continuous improvement of WD programs*
- WD contributions in preparing individuals for *change*
- WD contributions in participants' *employment security*
- *Promotability*, WD contributions in the career advancement of participants
- *Quality of work life*, WD contributions in lowering turnover rate and increasing management and union leader support
- *Union representation*, WD contributions in improving labor-management relations
- *Worker democracy*, employee participation in decision-making
- *Performance improvement at the Mega, Macro, and Micro levels*, application of skills and knowledge acquired through WD programs back on the job
- Contribution of WD programs to the *self-sufficiency* and *self-reliance* of Ohio employees and citizens
- *Goals*, linkage of WD programs to State of Ohio agencies' goals

Assessment Methods and Procedures

A sample of eligible state bargaining unit employees, State of Ohio agencies directors, OCSEA district leaders, and Workforce Development staff all participated in the three data collection procedures—survey, interviews, and focus groups—used by the needs assessment team. In collecting data for the 2003 needs assessment, interviews were conducted either in person or over the telephone. Thirteen representatives of the State of Ohio agencies were interviewed in the process. Interviewees included Agency Directors, Deputy Directors, Human Resource Managers, and Regional Managers, from a cross section of state agencies. In addition, interviews were conducted with two representatives of the OCSEA Steering Committee, two OCSEA district leaders, three OCSEA administrators, and a third-party vendor of training services.

Approximately 1,050 (of more than 20,000) eligible state bargaining unit employees were invited to participate in the survey data collection of the needs assessment. The eligible state bargaining unit employees included in the sample were representative (by percentage) of the multiple bargaining units within each State of Ohio agency participating in the assessment. Eligible state bargaining unit employees from each bargaining unit with active email addresses were then selected for inclusion in the sample, providing the assessment team with more than 1,500 contacts for the survey. Follow-up emails and phone calls were used to further encourage participation in the needs assessment survey. The questionnaire scale used for the survey was based on a 6-point Likert-type scale with re-

sponses ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (with a value of 1) to "Strongly Agree" (with a value of 6), with 288 OCSEA Bargaining Unit members contributing to the data set. The actual questionnaire instrument used is illustrated in the Appendix.

Finally, eight focus groups were held in three key cities across the state with a stratified sample of bargaining unit members and educational advocates from each of the State of Ohio agencies. A list of potential participants was provided to the consulting team by management, and of course, as with all the data collection procedures used here, participation was ultimately voluntary. Each focus group was composed of approximately 8-12 participants.

Data Analysis

Though the median is the most appropriate measure of central tendency for ordinal data, as represented by the 6-point Likert-type scale, gaps were estimated as the difference between the means of *What Is* and *What Should Be* responses (see Appendix). The needs assessment team also defined priority levels for each of the gaps. Gap priorities were distributed into three levels, with gaps less than .50 representing a relatively low priority; gaps between .50 and 1.25 representing a relatively meaningful priority, and gaps greater than 1.25 representing a critical gap. The priority levels are defined in relation to other gaps identified in the 2003 assessment rather than any standard or benchmark established in the 1999 assessment, since the same participants were not used in each study. Lastly, the identified gaps that resulted in an average *What Is* value of below 3.5 were given an additional weighting related to their significance,

because these were determined to potentially have higher priority given their perception as being low.

Assessment Limitations

Like with any research initiative, the results of the 2003 needs assessment must be considered within the context of the assessment procedures and the limitations imposed by working within an on-going governmental set of operations. Although the assessment team took steps to ensure the validity and reliability of the results and recommendations, there were inherent limitations to the data, and in turn, to the conclusions. For instance, it is essential that decisions based on this findings report be made with the acknowledgement that participation was voluntary and that it only reflects the ideas and attitudes of those who participated in the assessment's interviews, focus groups, and surveys. Additional data from Workforce Development documents and reports were used to supplement the data provided by the diverse and distinct perspectives of participants from across the state of Ohio and throughout the many State of Ohio agencies.

The confidentiality of all participants in the needs assessment was maintained throughout the data collection procedures. While these procedures made it possible for the assessment to address a host of questions related to Workforce Development, these procedures also limit the level of details that can be reported on agency specific issues that may compromise our confidentiality agreement with participants.

With these limitations in mind, the findings and recommendations were of great value and utility for decision makers involved with Workforce De-

velopment, OCSEA/AFSCME Local 11, and the agencies of the State of Ohio.

2003 Needs Assessment OCSEA Bargaining Unit Member Survey Results

Critical gaps, as discussed in the *data analysis* section, were found in the areas of:

- Availability
- Policies
- Change
- Employment Security
- Promotability
- Quality of Work Life
- Union Representation
- Worker Democracy
- Performance Improvement at the Mega, Macro and Micro levels
- Goals

A more detailed discussion of the findings follows.

1999 and 2003 Needs Assessment Gap Comparisons

Comparing the data from the 1999 needs assessment and the 2003 assessment offered a useful opportunity for Workforce Development to gain a perspective on their progress over the four years that transpired. Through the comparison of gaps between the eligible state bargaining unit employee survey data collected in 1999 and the results of the 2003 survey findings, trends related to the specific Workforce Development issues were identified, as illustrated in Table 1. Deltas, changes in the size of the item gaps (i.e., mean values of *What Is* compared to *What Should Be*), provided an initial view of progress made since the 1999 needs assessment.

The values presented in Table 1 also illustrate variations in the location of the gaps, which was essential in interpreting the findings of the assessment. For example, in 1999 the average value for *What Is* in terms of "availability" data points was 3.2 (where 3 represented "somewhat disagree," and 4 "somewhat agree"), while in 2003 the average increased to 4.7 (closer to 5, representing "agree"). As a result, while the gap decreased by a value of 1.3 (based on Likert-type scale values described previously), the location of the gap rose from a gap between values 3.2 and 5.2 to a gap between 4.7 and 5.4. The location of the gaps should be considered when interpreting the findings of the needs assessment survey, since they indicate a shift in perceptions and may also illustrate an increase or decrease in the importance or significance the individual item has for eligible state bargaining unit employees.

The comparison between 1999 and 2003 needs assessment studies showed a moderate but steady reduction of the gaps in most categories, as well as an improvement in users' perception of their current level.

The only two categories that showed an increase of the gaps/needs were strategic alignment and promotability. Focus groups and interviews to OCSEA and Ohio State management supported this perception.

2003 Qualitative Results

Three types of qualitative data were collected during the needs assessment: open-ended survey questions of OCSEA bargaining unit members, focus group discussions with Educational Advocates and OCSEA bargaining unit members, and *interview questions* with State

1999 Needs Assessment		2003 Needs Assessment		Delta
Issue (Survey question #)	Mean Values (What Is; What Should Be; Gap)	Issue (Survey question #)	Mean Values (What Is; What Should Be; Gap)	Change in gaps (of means)
Availability (Q1)	(3.2, 5.2, 2.0)	Availability (Q14)	(4.70, 5.44, .74)	(-1.3)
Quality (Q2)	(3.6, 5.3, 1.7)	Quality (Q15)	(4.76, 5.51, .75)	(-0.9)
(Q3)	(4.0, 5.3, 1.3)	(Q16)	(4.76, 5.51, .75)	(-0.5)
Policies (Q4)	(3.0, 5.1, 2.1)	Policies (Q17)	(4.81, 5.43, .62)	(-1.5)
(Q5)	(4.8, 5.3, 0.5)	(Q37)	(3.55, 5.34, 1.79)	(+1.3)
Resources (Q6)	(4.1, 5.3, 1.2)	Resources (Q18)	(4.70, 5.52, .82)	(-0.4)
(Q8)	(4.4, 5.2, 0.8)	(Q19)	(4.65, 5.40, .75)	(0.0)
Opportunity costs (Q9)	(3.8, 5.0, 1.2)	Opportunity costs (Q20)	(4.59, 5.33, .74)	(-0.5)
Continuous improvement (Q10) (Q11)	(3.6, 5.3, 1.7) (3.6, 5.2, 1.6)	Continuous improvement (Q21) (Q22)	(4.50, 5.50, 1.0) (4.43, 5.52, .99)	(-0.7) (-0.6)
Change (Q12)	(3.4, 5.3, 1.9)	Change (Q23) (Q38) (Q39)	(4.20, 5.39, 1.19) (3.47, 4.76, 1.29) (3.25, 5.29, 2.04)	(-0.7)
Employment security (Q13) (Q14) (Q15)	(4.3, 5.5, 1.2) (3.3, 4.9, 1.6) (3.3, 4.8, 1.5)	Employment security (Q24) (Q25) (Q26)	(4.72, 5.53, .81) (4.43, 5.35, .92) (4.21, 5.30, 1.09)	(-0.4) (-0.7) (-0.4)
Promotability (Q16)	(3.2, 4.5, 1.3)	Promotability (Q27)	(3.47, 5.13, 1.66)	(+0.4)
Union Representation (Q20)	(2.8, 5.0, 2.2)	Union Representation (Q30)	(3.56, 5.16, 1.6)	(-0.6)
Worker democracy (Q21)	(2.9, 4.8, 1.8)	Worker democracy (Q31)	(3.27, 5.09, 1.82)	(0.0)
Performance improvement (Q22)	(3.8, 5.1, 1.2)	Performance improvement (Q32)	(4.61, 5.39, .78)	(-0.4)
Individual goals (Q24)	(4.4, 5.4, 1.0)	Individual goals (Q36a)	(4.69, 5.51, .82)	(-0.2)

of Ohio agency directors and managers, as well as OCSEA leaders and senior staff. Table 2 illustrates input provided for each of the 15 focus areas of the assessment.

Trends Data

Also identified during this needs assessment were a variety of trends that impact the Workforce Development, OCSEA/AFSCME Local 11,

Table 2
Qualitative Input

Focus Area	Summarized Input
Availability	• More educational institutions from which potential participants can choose (especially in rural areas) • Allow all employees to participate no matter their status or employee classification, such as those that are currently exempt • Make training schedules more flexible to accommodate all members, especially considering schedules distributed around 24 hours • Clear instructions and information (including examples) from Workforce Development on what offerings are available and how to sign up • Increase awareness and accessibility of offerings (e.g. informational meetings and presentations)
Quality of Service	• Include the workforce in the identification of new and relevant programs for the job/unit • Submit consistent and timely payment to vendors and participating institutions • When calling for "customer support," a contact person should be reached/ return call within 24 hours • Workforce Development staff should be knowledgeable about offerings and procedures • Efficient and consistent processing of applications and inquiries
Policies	• Extend Workforce Development benefits to members' family • Transfer unused funds to those that want it • Include management in the implementation of skills gained from participation in Workforce Development offerings • Include management in selecting relevant programs • Create joint programs (management & union) • Consistent policies across state agencies • Loosen requirements/criteria for what courses/seminars can be taken
Resources	• Integrating all spending codes/funding categories • Cover books/materials under allowance • Increase the amount of the general fund available
Continuous improvement	• Include process for determining whether transfer of learning has occurred • Provide data that clearly demonstrates benefits of Workforce Development
Employment security	• Career Path Management (i.e., provide guidance for long-term career/employment planning)
Promotability	• Improve the promotion system by using skills and expertise as a criteria, rather than seniority or favoritism
Union representation	• Include programs that are specifically relevant to individual units • Add/Include representatives from all shifts/departments/units/ field staff in informational meetings

Table 2
(continued)

Focus Area	Summarized Input
Worker democracy	• Include additional eligible state bargaining unit employees in making decisions about what Workforce Development offerings should be made available • Include bargaining unit employees in disseminating information about Workforce Development offerings and benefits
Performance improvement	• Management should provide job opportunities to implement new skills • Management should provide on-the-job support for implementing new skills

State of Ohio agencies, and eligible bargaining unit employees. The analysis of these trends provided both a general framework that could be used to orient the strategic planning for future Workforce Development initiatives as well as to establish specific areas in which Workforce Development can assist individual State of Ohio agencies and their eligible state bargaining unit employees in meeting the demands associated with each trend.

Directors, educational advocates, stewards and district leaders of OCSEA, directors or deputy directors of the various state agencies provided valuable input about their perception of future trends and challenges through specific interviews.

In addition, this study included a detailed analysis of the Ohio budget trends, policies, demographics and economics as well as other previous studies and activities as major sources to identify trends, as well as relevant research on employment security, employability and similar workforce development programs in the United States and Europe.

General Trends

The challenges and opportunities that Workforce Development will have to address in the future were found to be within the context of the evolving roles, responsibilities, and economic challenges of State of Ohio agencies. It was clearly indicated that the proactive manner in which Workforce Development addresses these trends will be the essential element for continuing success. Through continuing initiatives and innovative new programs Workforce Development could be a key partner with State of Ohio agencies, OCSEA/AFSCME and eligible state bargaining unit employees in ensuring their common success.

New Economic Realities and Policies

Economic changes since 2000 limited economic resources available to State of Ohio agencies, presenting new challenges to State agencies, eligible state bargaining unit employees, as well as Workforce Development. As in most states, Ohio budgets were tight and improvements in workplace efficiencies

were necessary. Most State of Ohio agencies were required to maintain current levels of service (or even increase services) with a reduced amount of resources.

The consulting team suggested that Workforce Development be a key ally for State agencies in improving the value each adds to the entire State of Ohio. The joint evaluation of Workforce Development initiatives (State of Ohio and OCSEA/AFSCME Local 11) determined that there was evidence to support that Workforce Development initiatives contributed to the improved performance of State of Ohio agencies. The value added by Workforce Development was also evident in the survey data provided by eligible state bargaining unit employees as well as in the interviews with Agency leaders (especially with regards to the Workforce Development grants initiatives).

The analysis of future trends and the interviews with Agency leaders strongly suggested that Workforce Development could benefit from operating as a "consultant" to State of Ohio agencies and OCSEA/AFSCME Local 11; a strategic partner in helping them to add measurable value to specific projects by promoting the development of key workforce skills and competencies.

Changes in Government Roles and Organization

Merging of Agency roles and responsibilities, privatization, job transformation and reclassification, organizational restructuring, and other systemic changes in State of Ohio agencies each bring new challenges and opportunities for Workforce Development. New orga-

nizational cultures, as well as new requirements for skills and knowledge, represent areas where Workforce Development could continue to work with State of Ohio agencies in ensuring the employment security of eligible state bargaining unit employees and the success of the State agencies in meeting their missions.

Several agencies were actively working on developing new high performance workplaces that would require new workforce skills such as:

- Proficiencies in leading and participating in self-directed teams
- Utilizing collaborative technologies and practices to improve productivity and quality of service
- Developing cross-disciplinary competencies
- Moving from centralized to community-based work and services
- Focusing on customer service to communicate, promote and attract business and jobs.

A popular approach taken by governments to overcome fiscal crisis is to reorganize, privatize or outsource, although this has not been empirically proven as a cost-effective technique in the long-term. International Monetary Fund, World Bank and other government assistance agencies are reconsidering privatizations policies under the light of extensive international experience in the last 12 years (Mussa, 2002; Raimondo, 1988; Stiglitz, 2000). In Ohio, current initiatives to address budget short-falls, as well as other pressures, have included such approaches. When these are selected, privatization, mergers, and organizational restructuring each are most often accompanied by job reclassification and the require-

ment for new skills and knowledge. From a systemic view focused on social impact such as provided by the Mega planning approach, the savings generated by reducing payroll should be balanced against the additional spending required from other State Agencies—such as those taking care of employment, job insurance, mental health and education—in taking care of unemployed workers lacking the skills to be absorbed by the job market. Measuring that impact may demonstrate the value added by the skills and training provided by programs such as WD to both State and participants.

Based on the analysis of these societal indicators, the needs assessment report recommended that, in meeting its mission, Workforce Development may benefit from adopting a more proactive role as a strategic partnership between OCSEA/AFSCME and the State of Ohio agencies. This role could include continuing to provide support of labor-management initiatives that address issues related to privatization. Moreover, in order to maximize the benefits of the knowledge and skills provided, it was suggested that Workforce Development may also

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want to consider supporting labor-management initiatives that could impact performance on the job (e.g., employment security, updated job expectations, on-the-job support, required resources, etc.). For example, one of Ohio's state agencies is merging eight different inspection processes into two, and as a result there will likely be labor-management initiatives that could benefit from Workforce Development participation as a consulting partner. Likewise, the merger of two other agencies has resulted in many changes in organizational structure, culture, job classifications, and training requirements. Whatever the case, the study recommended Workforce Development to continue focusing on providing support to labor-management initiatives that were involved in the strategic changes resulting from the current economic realities and policies.

Many OCSEA bargaining unit positions were likely to require cross-training in order to keep pace with the changing environments of State of Ohio agencies. The addition of multiple tasks, computer literacy, and strong interpersonal skills are each becoming essential skills as

agency tactical plans shift in reaction to budget limitations. It was further suggested that through strategic alignment and cooperative initiative planning Workforce Development could be a partner in the success of the State agencies as they go through these changes.

High Performance Workplace

The needs assessment showed that in meeting the trends of employability in Ohio, Workforce Development would have to continue to focus support on basic skills requirements that provide for broad applications in the demanding jobs of the high performance workplace. For example, the needs assessment shows that basic skills, such as multi-tasking skills, will be needed in the high performance workplace, particularly as State agencies are forced by economic pressures to do more with less. By continuing to support labor-management initiatives as a strategic partner, Workforce Development could provide a comprehensive and more effective approach that will contribute not only to improving performance and efficiency but to achieve mutually agreed upon strategic objectives such as improving the quality of services to Ohio taxpayers and promoting employment security. Working together toward shared strategic goals will balance the agencies' short term priorities with employees' career and professional development goals and the goals of OCSEA, thus generating the mutually beneficial long-term commitment required to effectively improve and *sustain* the quality of service provided to the citizens/taxpayers of Ohio.

The following skill areas were identified in 1998 in the Joint Report on High Performance Work Systems and Alternative Compensation Systems and continue to remain as skill areas that can (and should) be addressed by Workforce Development. These skills were also in line with many of the SCANS 2000 standards issued by the U.S. Department of Labor (Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills, http://wdr.doleta.gov/SCANS/).

- *Basic Skills*: reading, writing, arithmetic and mathematics, speaking and listening
- *Thinking Skills*: ability to learn, ability to reason, ability to think creatively, ability to make decisions, ability to solve problems
- *Personal Qualities*: individual responsibility, self-esteem and self-management, sociability and integrity

The requirement for knowledge and skills related to computers and other technologies is, of course, a long-term trend requirement for all private and public sector employees. Although training and application opportunities in software applications like Microsoft Windows, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Outlook are essential skills in an expanding number and types of positions within most workplaces, throughout the needs assessment, skills related to problem solving and creative applications of technology were also identified as important areas for expanded initiatives for Workforce Development. Continuing focus on effective customer service and appropriate interpersonal skills training is another growing set of skills in demand by State of Ohio agencies (as well as most private sector orga-

nizations), and area of continuing opportunities for Workforce Development.

Economic Movers and Demographics

Although agriculture and manufacturing were likely to continue as important sources of employment in Ohio, job growth in the state over the next six to eight years was expected to be strongest in the service sectors (e.g., health care, local government and education, retail).

Preparing eligible state bargaining unit employees to employment security in this environment, and facilitating the success of State of Ohio agencies and OCSEA throughout this shift, offers many opportunities for Workforce Development. By targeting the knowledge and skills required for employment security early on, it was suggested that Workforce Development could work cooperatively with State agencies in supporting essential labor-management grant initiatives, training, and other educational opportunities.

Ohio will witness several demographic shifts. With an aging workforce of "baby-boomers" considerations for how Workforce Development can support the goals of eligible state bargaining unit employees leading up to, and after, their retirement will be an essential element of career counseling. The resulting introduction of many new, and likely less experienced, workers into the State of Ohio agencies will likewise increase the requirements for effective programs provided by Workforce Development. This will ensure they have the necessary skills for the success of agencies in the accomplishment of their missions.

General Trends Summary

The prevailing trends described briefly above will impact almost all aspects of work within State of Ohio agencies as well as Workforce Development. Table 3 illustrates an outline of the general, along with anticipated, changes in the required skills and knowledge of eligible state bargaining unit employees and recommendations for potential contributions Workforce Development could offer in order to ensure the success of State agencies, OCSEA, and eligible state bargaining unit employees in this ever-evolving environment.

Recommendations

Analysis of strategic projects and interviews with Agency Directors indicated that Workforce Development can be an ideal partner to assist State of Ohio agencies in ensuring that bargaining unit employees meet (or exceed) the U.S. Department of Labor's SCANS standards for high performance work systems.

Current research on Human Capital (Becker, 1962, 1989, 1992) and employability (De Grip, Van Loos & Sanders, 2000; European Commission, 2000; Gazier, 1999) provides evidence that joint labor-management programs such as Workforce Development have increased chances to effectively appreciate the State's human capital and increase employability than conventional training oriented to current jobs structure or independent individual efforts. This is possible because successful development of Human Capital and employability requires coordination of the two critical factors for: employee and employer's commitment and investment (Gazier, 1999).

Table 3
Future Trends Impact on Workforce Development Matrix
(based on interview data, extant data collection, and analysis of assessment findings)

Trend	Key Components Challenges	Key Skills, Competencies, Culture Changes, Actions Required	WD Possible Contributions
New Economic Realities And Policies	• Economic contraction and reorganization period • Budget constraints, changes • Privatization, outsourcing • Administration policies and priorities: – Promote prosperity / business – Service to customers – Education, Public Health, Care	• Strategic thinking, alignment • Strategies focused on Mega, "outside-in" definition of goals, measurement • ROI, Cost consequences, measurement skills • Business and community promotion focus • WD as Agencies consultant • Business skills and insight • Social service skills • Customer care, sales skills • Consulting skills • Management skills: Develop, measure and support employability	• Strategic partnership with Agencies in specific projects • Integrated planning and coordination with future plans • WD Consulting services to Agencies • Integration, "joint ventures" with BWC, ODJFS, ODMH based on complementary missions, shared interest on promoting employment and wellness • Focus on grant type projects collaboratively with major Agencies initiatives • Organize, measure, promote and support employability across agencies, state, private sector
Changes In Government Roles And Organization	• Decentralization, movement toward community-based, local services • Focus on productivity and efficiency • Changes in recruiting, evaluation and promotion criteria • Change in traditional management practices – From procedures, bureaucratic to customer – Hierarchical to team based – From managing processes to managing performance – Departmental to project management	• Cultural changes in: – Labor-Management relationship – Management practices (from procedures and rules- centered to service, community-centered) – Workforce core abilities: Participation, initiative, self-directed learning, teams • Cross-cultural skills • Community service skills • Performance management, improvement skills • Professional careers for public services within the state	• New, in-house programs to develop new skills in coordination with agencies • Facilitate and promote change by collaborating in all key areas of change: – Labor-Management training, coaching and facilitation – Workplace redesign projects • Collaborating with improvement teams, agencies training, or other agreed upon initiatives • WD participation and orientation to develop public management careers and programs within the agencies

Table 3 (continued)

Trend	Key Components Challenges	Key Skills, Competencies, Culture Changes, Actions Required	WD Possible Contributions

High Performance Workplace	• E-Government, technology based functions, operations and projects in most Agencies
	• Change from traditional to team-based, leaner organization
	• Merger of agencies, shared resources
	• Changes in jobs and job classifications
	• Cross-functional, cooperative new roles
		• Use of information and collaboration technologies for:
		  – Administration
		  – Technical, specialized work
		  – Knowledge management
		  – Distance learning, work
		• High Performance Work System requirements
		  – Participation
		  – Teamwork
		  – Decentralization
		  – Supervisor/Evaluator recognition
			• Coordinate and align current WDP (CPP and CET) with collaborative technologies skills and online support
			  – Complement CPP with online support, coaching to develop distance work and learning abilities on users
			  – Coordinate CET with specific programs to apply computer skills to actual or future technology implementation initiatives in Agencies
			• Labor-Management and workplace redesign projects coordinated Agencies' quality of service and performance improvement initiatives
			• Provide WD awareness training for managers and supervisors,
			• Develop awareness and WD skills among managers. For example: Coordinate with, and include, WD in OCPM-type program, to develop awareness and WD skills among new managers
			• WD can provide essential linkage between Agency labor-management committees and the OCSEA,

Table 3 (continued)

Trend	Key Components Challenges	Key Skills, Competencies, Culture Changes, Actions Required	WD Possible Contributions
Economic Moves and Demographics	• State government jobs will grow 4.3 % in 2000-2010 period (equal to Ohio population growth) • Only 5600 new jobs in State • Local government jobs will grow 11.3 % (mostly in Hospitals and Education) • Ohio economic movers: – Agriculture – Retail – Services (Human, Care for the elderly) • Ohio top job creators: (over 662.000 jobs for 2000-2010; See appendix A) – 20 job categories group 63 % of future jobs) – Local government will create 59,200 jobs • Aging workforce approaching retirement age in next 10 years • Relocation of workforce from central, urban, to local, community services • Telecommuting, technology based work increase in all agencies • Major changes in jobs: – Integration of different disciplines – Use of information and collaboration technologies – Customer services priorities – Decentralized, community based approach	• Prepare workforce for decentralization. Community-based, local jobs • Support economic movers with flexible, faster and more qualified service • Develop a more skilled, productive workforce and work systems in central state government • Define and implement succession and retirement plans • Develop new systems to bring state services closer to small communities • Develop new job definitions and qualifications • Develop flexible, multi-skilled workforce • Develop customer service focus and skills	• Orient WD users toward high grow jobs, promotion and career opportunities within and outside state government • Coordination with ODFJS, BWC to promote employability and job creation within Ohio • Support development of ODJFS • WD Retirement and Career Counseling plans • WD programs oriented to develop new skills and orientations required by agencies and labor market so current associates can qualify and perform. • WD continue focus on service and value added to the communities and all Ohio residents through eligible bargaining unit members. In addition, communicating the linkage of those results (through measurement) to the impact for State residents should be addressed.

It was also evident that an efficient strategic and tactical coordination of the individual and organizational efforts to increase Human Capital and employability was essential to produce results, maximize the return of the joint investment and render the full potential of Workforce Development programs for both parties.

Leading recommendations from the 2003 needs assessment included building greater strategic and tactical alignment across the strategic initiatives of Workforce Development, OCSEA, and each of the participating State of Ohio agencies. A continued lack of coordinated planning—of any type or at any level—across these three organizations will make it difficult for any of WD partners to individually meet their missions and achieve their goals as well as potentially limiting the positive and measurable impact of the cooperative initiative.

Early involvement and communication among the partners was suggested, and will continue to be essential in meeting the growing challenges associated with providing the necessary services to the residents of Ohio and improving workforce's employment security.

Based on the input gathered through focus groups with Educational Advocates, it appeared that their role is not as significant as it could be, particularly in terms of participation and communication. Thus, it was also recommended that Workforce Development improve significantly its current performance in measuring, documenting, and communicating the success of its initiatives not only in terms of resources and educational processes' effectiveness, but also in terms of achievement and progress toward strategic mission goals such as workforce employment security and quality of service to the residents of Ohio. Educational Advocates could participate not only in the measurement and tracking of the success and benefits of Workforce Development initiatives, but also be a key figure in the dissemination of such information.

Since employability is by modern definition a shared responsibility of government, employers or companies, and the individual employee (Gazier, 1999), its adequate measurement and evaluation is critical for organizational and individual success and accountability.

Tracking improvements of on-the-job performance as well as societal (i.e., Ohio resident) level Outcomes is critical to the continuous improvement of Workforce Development initiatives as it works to accomplish its mission of long-term employment security of eligible bargaining unit members, as well as to its ability to secure the resources required for its continued existence (particularly in times of critically limited budgets and potential threats to the job stability of its beneficiaries and sustainers).

Since unemployed residents of Ohio cease to pay income taxes while increasing the utilization of other public resources and services funded by the public budget, ensuring their employability through programs such as Workforce Development was recommended to be within the common interest of the employee as well as a fiscally responsible administration (Becker, 1989, 1992).

Conclusion

While no single assessment can address all of the questions and

concerns of an organization as broad in purpose and scope as Workforce Development, the 2003 needs assessment focused on 15 performance areas (i.e., availability, quality, policies, resource, opportunity costs, continuous improvement, change, employment security, promotability, quality of work life, union representation, worker democracy, performance improvement, self-sufficiency/self-reliance, and goals) of eligible state bargaining unit employees across eight participating State of Ohio agencies.

The findings of the needs assessment strongly supported the continuing efforts of Workforce Development through a variety of educational and training efforts. In meeting the changing demands of the eligible state bargaining unit employees, several recommendations were made based on a combination of questionnaire, focus group, and interview data.

Improving communication and strategic linkages at all levels in the Workforce Development partnership was the first action recommended by this study. Such improvements would allow key decisions to be made based on what is best for eligible bargaining union members, OCSEA as an organization, and the entire State and its agencies, in the long- and short-term. This can only be accomplished if Workforce Development partners work jointly with a new methodology for improving effectiveness through strategic alignment and the elaboration of a shared strategic plan that address the issues and opportunities described in this study.

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Appendix
Bargaining Union Members Questionnaire

About You
*Note: This information will **not** be used to identify you individually*

1. Age Group:
   ○ 18-25   ○ 26-35   ○ 36-45   ○ 46-55   ○ 56-65   ○ 66 and older

2. Education
   ○ High school Diploma/GED/Equivalent
   ○ Two-year college
   ○ Four-year college/Bachelors
   ○ Masters
   ○ Doctorate

3. Gender
   ○ Female   ○ Male

4. Time of employment in State, Agency
   ○ less than 3 years
   ○ 4-10 years
   ○ 11-15 years
   ○ 16-20 years
   ○ 21-25 years
   ○ 26- 30 years
   ○ Over 30 years

5. Which of the following WD programs have you participated in?
   ○ Tuition Assistance Plan
   ○ Computer Enrichment Training
   ○ Professional Development Program
   ○ Career Development Program
   ○ Computer Purchase Plan
   ○ Pre-Retirement Training Program
   ○ Labor-Management Relations
   ○ Workplace Redesign
   ○ Special Projects
   ○ None

6. Which are the most valuable results that WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT programs have generated for:
   a. Participants:

   b. The Organization (Agency, State):

   c. The community, the residents:

Appendix (continued)

WHAT IS

WHAT SHOULD BE

Column headers (WHAT IS, left side): Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree | Not Applicable

Column headers (WHAT SHOULD BE, right side): Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree | Not Applicable

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements by providing two responses to each question:

WHAT IS describes how you see Workforce Development initiatives *currently* operating.

WHAT SHOULD BE describes how you think Workforce Development initiatives *should be* operating.

7. Workforce Development provides adequate information about the following programs:

WHAT IS								WHAT SHOULD BE						
1 2 3 4 5 6 7							a. Tuition Assistance Plan	1 2 3 4 5 6 7						
1 2 3 4 5 6 7							b. Computer Enrichment Training	1 2 3 4 5 6 7						
1 2 3 4 5 6 7							c. Professional Development Program	1 2 3 4 5 6 7						
1 2 3 4 5 6 7							d. Career Development Program	1 2 3 4 5 6 7						
1 2 3 4 5 6 7							e. Computer Purchase Plan	1 2 3 4 5 6 7						
1 2 3 4 5 6 7							f. Pre-Retirement Training Program	1 2 3 4 5 6 7						
1 2 3 4 5 6 7							g. Labor-Management Relations	1 2 3 4 5 6 7						
1 2 3 4 5 6 7							h. Workplace Redesign	1 2 3 4 5 6 7						
1 2 3 4 5 6 7							i. Special Projects	1 2 3 4 5 6 7						

8. The benefits of participating in Workforce Development programs are clearly understood by:

WHAT IS								WHAT SHOULD BE						
1 2 3 4 5 6 7							a. All potential participants	1 2 3 4 5 6 7						
1 2 3 4 5 6 7							b. All those who are critical to support the participants	1 2 3 4 5 6 7						

9. What specific suggestions for improving current programs would you recommend?

10. What new programs do you think would be useful for WD to offer? Why?

11. Do you have an example/experience that shows how WD programs add value to the residents of Ohio? Explain

12. Did you participate in the 1999 Workforce Development needs assessment by either filling out a questionnaire or participating in a focus group?
○ Yes   ○ No   ○ Do not remember

13. What aspect of WD programs do you believe has improved the most over the last three years? Explain.

Appendix (continued)

2003 Workforce Development Questionnaire

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements by providing <u>two responses</u> to each question:

⬅ ➡

WHAT IS
describes how you see Workforce Development initiatives *currently* operating.

WHAT SHOULD BE
describes how you think Workforce Development initiatives *should be* operating.

Columns (left, WHAT IS): Strongly Disagree / Disagree / Somewhat Disagree / Somewhat Agree / Agree / Strongly Agree / Not Applicable

Columns (right, WHAT SHOULD BE): Strongly Disagree / Disagree / Somewhat Disagree / Somewhat Agree / Agree / Strongly Agree / Not Applicable

WHAT IS	Question	WHAT SHOULD BE
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	14. WD programs are consistently available across all State Agencies	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	15. Workforce Development programs provide useful information and skills for participants' current and future jobs.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	16. Workforce Development programs are relevant to bargaining unit members' current and future jobs.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	17. The confidentiality of participants is adequately maintained by Workforce Development.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	18. Workforce Development training providers have adequate knowledge of the content they teach	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	19. The skills of Workforce Development training providers are adequate.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	20. Participating in Workforce Development programs while meeting other work responsibilities is realistic.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	21. Workforce Development programs provide participants timely information and skills.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	22. The content of Workforce Development programs is up-to-date.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	23. WD programs adequately prepare participants for change (voluntary or mandatory).	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	24. Workforce Development programs enhance participants' careers.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	25. The employment security of bargaining unit members is positively impacted by Workforce Development programs.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	26. Workforce Development programs have a positive influence on retention and turnover.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	27. Participants of Workforce Development programs are more likely than non-participants to be promoted quicker.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Appendix (continued)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7	28. Participation in WD programs clearly contributes to bargaining unit members' quality of life at work (desirable working conditions).	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	29. WD programs have adequate support from:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	a. Management	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	b. Union leaders	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	c. Participants	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	30. WD programs improve the effectiveness of labor-management relations	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	31. Worker democracy (participation in decision-making) at the worksite is aided by participation in Workforce Development programs.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	32. I have been able to apply the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and/or abilities gained through participation in Workforce Development programs on the job.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	33. The benefits of participation in Workforce Development programs add value to:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	a. Me	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	b. My organization	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	c. Ohio Residents	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	34. The following factors positively contribute to the transfer / implementation of WD programs content to the workplace:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	a. WD provide sufficient opportunities to gain the skills for success in our workplace	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	b. Adequate management involvement and support	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	c. WD programs are supported by our organizational culture, practices and policies	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	d. WD programs are aligned with work demands and planning	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	e. WD programs are supported by adequate coaching/ job-aids	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	f. There is a supportive environment for WD programs	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	g. Our incentives system and procedures encourage implementation of WD program content	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	h. The level of Labor / Management collaboration facilitates implementation of WD programs	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Appendix (continued)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7		1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	35. Workforce Development programs make a positive impact on bargaining unit members' quality of life in general, as residents of Ohio.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	36. WD programs clearly contribute to:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	a. My professional development plans & expectations	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	b. My Agency's strategic plans	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	c. The goals of OCSEA	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	d. The plan and priorities of the State of Ohio	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	e. What the State of Ohio brings back to its residents	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	37. Workforce Development is part of the agency's strategic planning process.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	38. The agency uses Workforce Development as a resource to move toward a high performing workplace.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	39. The agency uses Workforce Development as a resource to improve labor-management relations.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Thank you very much for your valuable contributions.