High-Leverage Governance Strategies for Workforce Development Systems

By Heath Prince, Jobs for the Future

Part of a series of reports on engaging employers in workforce development
WINs, a collaboration of Jobs for the Future, the Center for Workforce Preparation of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and the Center for Workforce Success of the National Association of Manufacturers, addresses the workforce development needs of businesses and communities. Launched in 1997, WINs works with local employer organizations across the country that are on the cutting-edge of workforce development, testing the proposition that they can play a unique intermediary role in achieving a dual goal:

★ Improving the economic prospects of disadvantaged job-seekers and workers; and

★ Meeting the needs of their member firms for employees at the entry-level and above.

The Role of Employers in WINs

A basic principle of WINs is that efforts to help individuals succeed must provide education and training that meets employer needs for knowledge and high skills. Similarly, individuals—particularly those with low education and skill levels—will not succeed in gaining family-sustaining employment unless they gain the skills necessary to perform in today’s complex work environment.

Yet the top challenge faced by the people and organizations whose mission is to serve either constituency—job seekers or employers—is the challenge of engaging effectively with employers. For example, in July 2002, WINs asked a group of workforce development professionals, “What is the primary workforce development challenge facing your community?” Half the respondents answered, “Employers are not connected to the system.” WINs then asked, “What is the biggest challenge you face in implementing the Workforce Investment Act?” Over 40 percent of respondents said, “Engaging employers.”

Jobs for the Future has prepared a series of resources on meeting the challenge of engaging employers in workforce development. These include:

★ Employer-Led Organizations and Career Ladders

★ From Stakeholders to Partners: Organizing Community Partnerships for Workforce Development

★ High-Leverage Governance Strategies for Workforce Development Systems

★ Hiring, Retaining, and Advancing Front-Line Workers: A Guide to Successful Human Resources Practices

★ Mentoring

★ Working Together on Worker Training
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Introduction
When responding to the labor and skill needs of their members, many employer organizations have assumed an active role in shaping the design and direction of local workforce development systems. These organizations are uniquely positioned to leverage their relationships with their employer members to effect change in local labor markets. To assist such efforts, Jobs for the Future has examined exemplary governance practices conducted by leading employer organizations. We have identified high-leverage “governance strategies” that address the ways in which employer organizations can influence the direction and operation of their local workforce development systems for the dual purposes of improving advancement opportunities for workers and meeting the workforce needs of employers.

This report briefly describes exemplary governance strategies in six broad areas of practice:

• Planning and Development;
• Policy;
• Promotion;
• Performance Measurement and Continuous Improvement;
• Operational Leadership; and
• Administering Innovative Services.

Several high-leverage strategies and examples are identified for each of these activity areas.

The appendix provides additional information, including the impact of each strategy, the difficulty of implementing each strategy, and the characteristics of a workforce development system promoted by each strategy.

This guide includes contact information to help you learn more about many of the practices described here. You may also contact info@jff.org for additional information. In your request, please describe the strategies of interest to you and the reasons for your interest.

Planning and Development Strategies

Through planning and development strategies, employer organizations take lead responsibility for shaping local workforce development planning and development processes. They leverage their relationships with their employer members, as well as their knowledge of the demand for labor and skills, to influence the direction taken by local workforce development systems.

Make recommendations to local Workforce Investment Boards regarding the participation of business community representatives in workforce development system planning.

The Greater Memphis Chamber of Commerce in Tennessee played a significant role in appointing the business representatives to the local Workforce Investment Board. The majority of the WIB’s business representatives were selected by the Memphis Chamber as key supporters of its Memphis 2005 Plan, a ten-year economic plan for Memphis/Shelby County. For more information, see www.memphischamber.com.

Bring about collaboration among public workforce development systems across political jurisdictions by: a) creating an “umbrella” organization that coordinates and manages workforce activities and strategies for the entire labor market area; b) coordinating activities of WIBs along functional lines; or c) coordinating activities of WIBs along programmatic lines.

Workforce Essentials of Clarksville, Tennessee, is an “umbrella” organization that manages all workforce development activities for its region. This nonprofit organization was established as the clearinghouse and coordinator of all workforce projects initiated by the region. It operates nine One-Stops and administers all federal and state workforce programs. For more information, see www.workforceessentials.com.

Supplement and corroborate labor market information gathered by local workforce investment boards and One-Stops (e.g., vacancy levels and turnover rates for high-demand and emerging occupations).

Market Lubbock, in Lubbock, Texas, has developed a database that ties into the curricula of local schools and the local community college for the purposes of placing, training, and advancing workers. By collecting, aggregating, and analyzing local labor market information, the system that Market Lubbock developed plays a major role in identifying gaps in the job skills for the
regional job market. When data in the system is broken down and gaps in job skills are identified, schools develop training programs to fill the gaps. In addition, Market Lubbock updates this data on a regular basis in collaboration with regional planning district or regional employment service divisions to keep current with local employer needs. For more information, see www.marketlubbock.com.

Identify employer skill requirements for new hires and incumbent workers in order to set standards for training quality.

The Greater Memphis Chamber of Commerce, as a goal of its Memphis 2005 initiative, seeks to meet employer skill needs by aligning local industries into clusters, and then identifying skill requirements for multiple occupational levels within each cluster. Organized by industry cluster, local employers identify the academic and technical skills required by their workforce. The employers then communicate these requirements to their suppliers and K-12 and postsecondary educational institutions. For more information, see www.memphischamber.com.

Document the need for support services (e.g., child care, transportation), health insurance, and other benefits that support employment of entry-level and low-income workers.

The Colorado Association of Commerce and Industry’s Millennium Blueprint sketches out a long-term strategy for sustaining and strengthening the state economy. The blueprint was developed by the CACI’s Educational Foundation. A major component in preparing the blueprint was documenting the need to strengthen the child care services system, particularly for workers in low-paying industries. The report highlights the need to:

- Promote public and private Web-based databases of child care providers;
- Endorse flexible company personnel policies (sick leave, flextime, etc.);
- View child care quality and availability as a workforce and economic development issue;
- Educate workers about child care options;
- Support the creation and publication of better data;
- Promote business understanding of cultural differences regarding child care;
- View company child care policies as employee attraction/retention incentives; and
- Encourage companies and groups of firms to provide emergency child care.

For more information, see www.businesscolorado.com.

Create industry cluster focus groups, develop job profiles and skill sets required of the jobs identified by the focus groups, and communicate the needs to training providers.

The Greater Memphis Chamber of Commerce, as a goal of its Memphis 2005 initiative, seeks to meet employer skill needs by aligning local industries into clusters, then identifying skill requirements for multiple occupational levels within each cluster. The “Workforce Initiative” is based on the strategy of building a career cluster system that promotes public/private partnerships to provide better career development opportunities for all students. Companies, large and small, are grouped by industry to form seven career clusters with K-12 schools, postsecondary institutions, and community organizations. The clusters are based on the region’s targeted industries for economic development. For more information, see www.memphischamber.com.

Strengthen the links between the workforce investment system and postsecondary institutions by communicating employers’ needs to both.

The Charlotte (North Carolina) Chamber of Commerce, through a close relationship with industry partners and Central Piedmont Community College, is erasing divisions in the college. With funds from contract training for staff development, it invites academic faculty to teach in the corporate college and takes a pyramid approach to skill development. This approach bundles curricula into industry-recognized certificates and helps individuals progress from basic to advanced skills. For more information, see www.charlottechamber.com.

Build the case that workforce development is a key economic development strategy; use this approach to strengthen the linkages between workforce and economic development agencies.

The Greater Memphis Chamber of Commerce was asked to take the lead in pulling together the city’s workforce and economic development efforts. The Chamber, in conjunction with the city’s Office of Planning and Development, developed a long-range economic development plan for the region. The Chamber and the office convened a meeting of over
100 business representatives to discuss methods for reconnecting employer interests with workforce development. This resulted in significant innovations regarding local workforce development policy and the creation of Memphs 2005, a $15 million project, funded primarily by business but with matching funds from the city and county. For more information, see www.memphiscambmer.com.

Policy Development and Advocacy Strategies

Through policy development and advocacy strategies, employer organizations influence local, state, and federal policies regarding workforce development. They are articulate proponents of policies that improve the connection between employer needs and the public workforce development system. Employer organizations educate, influence, and participate on policymaking boards to achieve employer-friendly changes in workforce development policy.

Hold Chamber-led community forums in workforce development in each political jurisdiction.

The Hampton Roads (Virginia) Chamber of Commerce coordinated Town Hall meetings, enhanced the importance of workforce development for the region, and it explored ways to develop strategic partnerships for leveraging resources to address the problems identified. These meetings helped the Chamber develop a five-year strategic plan for addressing workforce development for the region. For more information, see www.hrccva.com.

Influence the choice of elected and appointed officials to promote employer-driven workforce development and education.

Operating under the Greater San Diego Chamber of Commerce, the Business Roundtable for Education engages in a broad array of activities around education and workforce development. The roundtable’s politically savvy, highly visible members have a strong record of obtaining the support of the Chamber’s board of directors. In 1986, the roundtable backed a successful three-party slate for school board. More recently, it was instrumental in selecting the San Diego City Schools superintendent, who works closely with the group around improving the alignment between education and the workforce needs of employers. For more information, see www.sdchamber.org.

Direct educational efforts to both opinion leaders and the public around the workforce development needs of employers.

Since 1988, the Wichita (Kansas) Chamber of Commerce has developed programs to encourage, evaluate, and provide direction for improving the local workforce development system. The Chamber’s Business Education Success Team (BEST), a business and education partnership, facilitates flexible, lifelong education and training to better meet employers’ workforce development needs. For more information, see www.wichitakansas.org.

Recommend the appointment of influential business representatives to workforce investment boards and other decision-making groups regarding the workforce development system, particularly in regard to training curricula and processes.

The Greater El Paso (Texas) Chamber of Commerce has been a leading force in bringing employers into the workforce development arena. A prime example of this strategy is its close connections to the Workforce Investment Board and its nomination of representatives to the WIB and Youth Council. For more information, see www.elpaso.org.

Promote policies that benefit low-wage workers, such as changing Unemployment Insurance to make part-time employees eligible and reallocating a portion of employers UI taxes to create training funds.

The Millennium Blueprint, developed by the CACI Educational Foundation for the Colorado Association of Commerce and Industry, delineates a grassroots-driven business effort to influence state policies regarding economic and workforce development. A major recommendation of the Blueprint was for the Colorado General Assembly to enact CACI’s HB 00-1340 tax-incentive proposal for employer investment in worker training. The Blueprint and its recommendations have received close attention by state and local policymakers. For more information, see www.businesscolorado.com.

Advocate for policies that would facilitate the closer alignment of disparate funding streams to increase system flexibility and make the workforce development system more employer-friendly; advocate at the local level for the integration of state and local workforce development funding.

The New Hampshire Business and Industry Association was a key proponent of aligning state economic development funds with business-led workforce
development activities, particularly regarding state welfare-to-work initiatives. In addition, the BIA promoted the redefinition of economic development efforts to include the improvement of incumbent worker training programs. For more information, see www.nhbia.org.

Advocate for policies that facilitate the development of inter-firm collaboration regarding workforce development activities.

The Millennium Blueprint, developed by the CACI Educational Foundation for the Colorado Association of Commerce and Industry, delineates a grassroots-driven business effort to influence state policies regarding economic and workforce development. A primary recommendation in the Blueprint was to urge the state to adopt policies to support cluster-driven economic and workforce development strategies, as well as to promote cluster-driven strategies with companies, trade associations, local Chambers of Commerce, and local economic development councils. For more information, see www.businesscolorado.com.

Increase incentives for customized worker training that can be accessed by employers who demonstrate commitments to skills-upgrading, promotion, and pay increases; use flexible state funds to foster training programs for incumbent workers.

The New Hampshire Business and Industry Association advocated for a legislative change that would reallocate an existing fee collected as part of employers’ Unemployment Insurance payments to fund training. While the legislation was not enacted, administrative fees were eventually reallocated for this purpose as a result of BIA’s efforts. The resulting pool of training funds provides a key source of flexible training funds for incumbent workers. For more information, see www.nhbia.org.

Influence the flow of resources to partnerships between employers and workforce development providers in order to provide post-employment training and support services leading to skill development and career advancement.

The Greater Holyoke (Massachusetts) Chamber of Commerce created an Employment Partnership to focus on the skill needs of local paper processors and health care institutions and to develop initiatives to upgrade the skills of incumbent workers for those sectors. A key member of the partnership is the local Workforce Investment Board and its One-Stop operator, Career Point. The partnership with the WIB permits the Chamber to direct resources to better align the worker training services offered through the consortia with support services provided through the public system. For more information, see www.holycham.org.

Align economic development, workforce development, education, human services, and other policies at the state and local levels.

The Greater Memphis Chamber of Commerce was the principal sponsoring organization in creating Memphis 2005, a ten-year economic plan for the Memphis/Shelby County MSA that focuses economic development efforts on recruiting and expanding existing businesses that build skills and offer opportunities to earn family-supporting wages. This leadership grew out of a perceived need to align the region’s economic development activities with its workforce development, human services, and education efforts. The mission of Memphis 2005 is “to create and sustain an educated and skilled labor force providing an environment for Memphis organizations to be globally competitive and provide family sustaining jobs.” The Chamber notes the competitive advantage that improved workforce development capacity provides in attracting businesses with high-skill, high-wage jobs. For more information, see www.memphischamber.com.

Promotion Strategies

Through promotion strategies, employer organizations actively promote increased employer involvement in leading and shaping the progress of the workforce development system in a manner that benefits both employers and workers. The organizations take advantage of their positions as representatives of the interests of their employer members to advocate for increased utilization of public workforce development systems by employers.

Market workforce development services and their benefits to employers; use employer organization newsletters and special promotions to market benefits.

Greater Philadelphia Works, working with the Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce and the local welfare-to-work initiative, has developed a quarterly newsletter and collateral marketing brochure. These are distributed in Chamber marketing programs to highlight the efforts of Greater Philadelphia Works and to promote the significance of workforce development to expanding the economy of Greater Philadelphia. For more information, see www.philachamber.com.
Disseminate performance results and the impact of continuous improvement efforts to employers.

San Francisco Works, a non-profit affiliate of the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, coordinates with businesses working with the Chamber to identify the community’s manpower needs and then helps develop performance standards to meet those needs. These efforts have enhanced employment, retention, and success rates for businesses in its region. SFWorks is collaborating with the Chamber to disseminate information about employer activities that have led to the hiring of over 2,000 well-trained and well-prepared former welfare recipients. For more information, see www.sfworks.org.

Support efforts to market workforce development services and their benefits to low-wage workers.

The Greater Austin (Texas) Chamber of Commerce expanded the benefits of AustinAtWork.com, the Chamber’s electronic-recruitment Web site, to low-wage workers seeking to upgrade their skills. The Capital Area Training Foundation, affiliated with the Chamber, launched the Greater Austin@Work Partnership. This partnership, supported by the city, the Chamber, the Austin American-Statesman, and Hire.com, extends discounts and other benefits to corporate partners who post job openings on AustinAtWork.com. Success of the electronic recruiter and the partnership depended heavily on a promotional campaign for the Web site launch. From the beginning, effective communication was a major component of the launch, producing maximum media and public attention. Weekly planning meetings began months before the scheduled launch, and an events planner and a public relations coordinator were hired. The mayor, local CEOs, and the publisher of the Austin American-Statesman promoted the partnership at a news conference carried by local television stations. At the time of the launch in June 2000, 100 jobs were posted on AustinAtWork.com, and 1,000 job candidates submitted their resumes. By the following October, 470 jobs had been posted and 27,000 job candidates had submitted resumes. For more information, see www.austin-chamber.org.

Promote the high quality of workforce development services to assist in raising funds for such initiatives from both public and private sources.

Opportunity, Inc., a regional workforce authority, was created by Norfolk, Virginia, and charged with developing a workforce system that strategically addresses the city’s labor market needs. Opportunity, Inc., is closely linked to the Hampton Roads Chamber and promotes the variety and range of workforce services available to the city’s businesses, thus aligning economic development and workforce development. As a result, Opportunity, Inc., has received grants and contributions from foundations in the region to help support workforce development programs. For more information, see www.opportunityhamptonroads.com.

Market the workforce development system’s capacity to provide a labor pool with the right skills to support expansion of existing businesses and to attract new ones.

Working with the Hampton Roads Partnership, a business/employer organization, Virginia Beach, Virginia, has identified the staffing needs of employers and communicated these to area colleges. As part of its economic development efforts, the city has developed an economic development strategy for attracting new businesses, requiring them to meet certain wage and investment standards before the city will market to them or assist their efforts to locate in the city. The city’s Economic Development Department focuses on recruiting companies that employ knowledge-based jobs that pay a minimum of $35,000 per year, based on the belief that such employers will be the driving force for expanding the region’s economy. For more information, see www.hrp.org.

Performance Measurement and Continuous Improvement Strategies

Through performance measurement and continuous improvement strategies, employer organizations lead efforts to tie system performance to measurable, industry-based outcomes. By promoting accountability to recognized system performance measures and industry skills standards, employer organizations continuously improve the system.

Encourage the development of entry-level skill standards that meet employers’ general work-readiness and technical-proficiency requirements.

The Dallas Chamber of Commerce’s workforce development efforts have led to the Texas Skills Standard and Certification Project. This project is a partnership of the Chamber with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the Texas Education Agency, and the Texas Department of Commerce. The partners, working with local Workforce Investment Boards and the Dallas County Community College District, have developed a workforce-readiness certification based on SCANS skills. Local employers hiring for entry-level jobs recognize this certificate as a stan-
standard for employment. It is based on tools to assess seven specific workplace skills required of entry-level workers. These tools were developed with ACT WorkKeys and assess skills in math, listening, writing, locating information, teamwork, reading for information, and applied technology. This project has linked the workforce development system to performance outcomes identified by the local Workforce Investment Board. For more information, see www.dallaschamber.org.

Assist employers in defining and communicating changing workplace needs in order to guide continuous improvement in workforce development system services.

The Virginia Peninsula Chamber of Commerce, in Newport News/Hampton, Virginia, working with the Peninsula Alliance for Economic Development, has developed industry-based cluster groups. These groups define the current and future needs within industries, and employer organizations facilitate the communication of those needs back to the educational and governmental communities. As a result, training and educational curricula are developed to reflect current and future manpower needs. This program has been highly successful in meeting the needs of local employers and in helping attract new businesses to the area. For more information, see www.vpcc.org.

Influence workforce development culture to be more customer-driven and outcome-oriented.

The San Diego Chamber of Commerce/Business Roundtable for Education has influenced a change in culture for the business and educational communities. The Chamber established a separate division to focus on educational reform to ensure a highly skilled and productive workforce. This division, the San Diego Business Roundtable for Education, is funded by foundation and business contributions. The Chamber, with its roundtable division, has enhanced a broader and more customer-driven workforce program for Greater San Diego. Working with the regional Workforce Investment Board, the roundtable has developed a One-Stop Service Delivery Center that is a model for the nation in customer service and performance standards. For more information, see www.sdchamber.org.

Lead efforts to structure workforce development systems to achieve designated outcomes.

The Greater Houston Chamber of Commerce and Houston Works have designed a workforce structure that identifies performance standards for the local Workforce Investment Board and is based upon the city’s economic development goals. The partnership has integrated the goals of workforce development with the city’s existing and target economic development plans. For more information, see www.houston.org.

Operational Leadership Strategies

Through operational leadership strategies, employer organizations influence and improve the system by assuming responsibility for some of its functions. Employer organizations leverage their relationships with the business community to convene forums of employers for multiple purposes, including identifying skill needs.

Establish a partnership with the local community college for assessing skills, identifying gaps between the skills of students and those required by employers, and designing training to close skill gaps.

The Virginia Peninsula Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with Thomas Nelson Community College, has developed a Regional Workforce Assessment Center. Located in Hampton, the center is using ACT WorkKeys as a tool to profile area jobs for employers and to assess potential employees against the jobs requirements highlighted by the profiles. Gaps revealed by assessments of potential employees are identified, and case managers work with the job seekers to close the gap with a planned education/training program. The center has streamlined the employment process for local employers and enhanced the efficiency of job placement by the community college. It has also helped the college’s training curriculum development to reflect employer needs. For more information, see www.vpcc.org.
Initiate focus groups of training providers as a step toward forming a network for reducing present and future skill gaps in workforce skills.

Opportunity, Inc., in Norfolk, Virginia, has developed training-provider focus groups to address regional labor market needs. An affiliate of the Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce, Opportunity, Inc., worked with the Chamber to develop six industry-based cluster groups: health care, retail, manufacturing, hospitality, shipbuilding, and information technology. Each group has identified the workforce development needs of current and future jobs. Opportunity, Inc., has collected this data and formed education/training provider partnership focus groups to address skill gap shortages that area employers have identified. For more information, see www.opportunityhamptonroads.com.

Simplify access to, decision-making about, and reporting around public resources for workforce development to make these resources flexible enough to meet labor and skill shortages in a timely manner.

The Greater El Paso (Texas) Chamber of Commerce has helped serve a long-term need of the business community for an employer-driven, flexible training system that meets the needs of employers and workers. In response to this need, the Chamber initiated a partnership to create a One-Stop technical training and services center owned and operated by the Chamber Foundation. The foundation, a subsidiary of the Chamber, set up the El Paso Workforce Collaboration, a limited liability corporation, and purchased a former Levi-Strauss plant to house an integrated One-Stop workforce center serving employers, individuals seeking employment, and the community. The center also houses numerous local, state, and federal agencies and training providers who can coordinate efforts and develop innovative programs to train and transform the community’s labor force. For more information, see www.elpaso.org.

Target resources to employer-led training initiatives or employer/workforce development provider initiatives that meet specific employer training needs.

Associated Industries of Massachusetts, an association of 5,400 Massachusetts employers, provides technical assistance to help their member companies apply for grants from the state’s Workforce Training Fund. This fund helps support customized training of incumbent workers, with money from Unemployment Insurance. AIM’s technical assistance consists of analyzing employer training needs, writing proposals, and providing general management of grant applications. AIM also offers training resources for companies receiving grants, mostly in the area of soft skills. For more information, see www.aimnet.org.

Organize a network of providers to provide a single point of entry for employers

The Greater Austin (Texas) Chamber of Commerce, with strong and highly visible mayoral support over two consecutive administrations, has created GreaterAustin@Work, a partnership among city and county agencies, community-based organizations, community colleges, universities, many training vendors, and leading employers. This partnership has taken the lead in coordinating the city’s economic development activities with its workforce development and school-to-work activities. Through its electronic recruiter, AustinAtWork.com, Greater Austin@Work has created a single point of contact for area employers searching for workers in a variety of industries. For more information, see www.austin-chamber.org.

Strategies for Administering Innovative Services

Through strategies for administering innovative services, employer organizations serve as a testing ground for workforce development innovations. Employer organizations invest in, implement, and administer workforce development programs with the objective of ultimately having them adopted by the local workforce development system and/or funded through the local Workforce Investment Board.

Incubate programs for adoption by local workforce development systems.

The Greater Austin (Texas) Chamber of Commerce and former Mayor Kirk Watson spearheaded the Greater Austin@Work Partnership in collaboration with the Capital Area Workforce Development Board, regional employers, educational institutions, Travis County, and other community partners. The partnership is a public/private regional workforce initiative. Its goals are to build the quality and quantity of talent in Greater Austin by supporting long-term educational and workforce development efforts and to recruit new talent into the region. The solution is an online recruitment portal for Central Texas, AustinAtWork.com, which is hosted by the Austin American-Statesman and operated by
Hire.com. The Greater Austin@Work Partnership and AustinAtWork.com have contributed to fundamental systemic change in workforce development in Austin. For more information, see www.austin-chamber.org.

Recruit firms to participate in collaborative workforce development efforts.

The Rochester (New York) Chamber of Commerce launched the Rochester Corporate Training Initiative through which several large and mid-sized corporations have agreed to open up their internal training programs to other firms. The Chamber has taken the lead in working with these firms to develop a common curricular vocabulary and a Web-based course catalogue. The companies that developed the training for their own workers are free to establish their price for making the training available to other companies. If the training is classroom-based, it is frequently accessible only at the site of the sponsoring firm, but the training can be offered off-site as warranted by demand from other firms. As more training offerings migrate to the Internet, they become far more accessible to other companies. The initiative also allows training and education institutions to list their training offerings within the same Web-based course catalogue. For more information, see www.rnychamber.com.

Establish structures for sharing training resources and leveraging training funds.

The Greater Holyoke Chamber of Commerce has had significant success organizing employers in the local paper-processing industry to address workforce needs. In the late 1980s, small paper processors in Massachusetts began to feel the pinch of shortages of qualified entry-level workers. A number of these employers, who had been meeting regularly under the auspices of the local Chamber to address mutual business problems, discussed the issue. After some time, the Chamber recognized this informal group as the Workforce Development Committee. The committee sought partnerships with people and institutions that could be helpful, including the head of Holyoke’s economic development department, the local community college, and the Regional Employment Board. This group formed itself into the Employment Partnership and, through the early 1990s, the partners explored solutions and strategies, leading directly to the development of the machine operators’ training consortium, created by participating employers. For more information, see www.holycham.org.

Draw from inter-firm collaboration practices to influence workforce development activities.

The Garment Industry Development Corporation was formed by New York City’s garment industry trade association, the Mayor’s office, and the International Ladies Garment Worker Union to address both supply and demand side issues in the industry. GIDC adopted an integrated, systemic view of the entire industry using an approach now referred to as the sectoral method to restructure and reposition the garment industry. It encouraged firms to invest in new machinery and adopt new production techniques, and it encouraged trade associations to pursue new market niches and business alliances. In addition, GIDC pursued the creation of good jobs in the industry by developing relationships with the sector’s major actors. Through its Super Sewers program, GIDC offers displaced workers an eight-week program in advanced sewing machine skills and workplace English. For more information, see www.gidc.org.

Serve as a central convening entity for career ladder development.

San Francisco Works is part of a citywide collaborative that is developing career ladders in the information technology industry. SFWorks staff also played a lead role in developing the proposal for San Francisco and San Mateo counties to participate in the California Caregiver Training, a career ladders initiative targeting home health care workers and funded with Workforce Investment Act and Welfare-to-Work funds. For more information, see www.sfworks.org.

Promote the adoption by Chamber members of industry skill standards and their recognition of skill certificates earned by workers.

As a key component of its Memphis 2005 Plan, the Greater Memphis (Tennessee) Chamber of Commerce has divided the Memphis labor market into seven industry/career clusters. Assigned to each of these clusters are business and industry partners whose primary tasks include defining skill standards required in the cluster, providing technical subject matter experts, validating content and assessment development, developing and implementing connecting activities, and employing workers in target occupational clusters and industries. For more information, see www.memphischamber.com.
Appendix

For each of the exemplary governance strategies described in this report, this table provides:

• The impact of each strategy on a scale of high, medium, or low; and
• The difficulty of implementing each strategy on a scale of high, medium, or low.

The table also notes how each strategy promotes several characteristics identified by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce as describing a workforce development system that meets the needs of employer. A responsive workforce development system is:

**Market-driven:** This reflects the importance of developing a system that is guided by the needs of business and results in benefits to business and the advancement of low-wage workers. In such a system, employer-led workforce boards establish industry standards for training, choose the best trainers, and hold the system accountable for meeting performance standards.

**Comprehensive:** Needed are both more streamlined service delivery in the workforce development system and a continuum of services as workers advance in skills. Consolidation of federal, state, and local workforce development programs and services into convenient physical locations and electronic sites permits employers and workers to connect in real or virtual service networks to meet their employment needs and provide support services.

**Portable:** Job-training funds flow to high-performing programs through participants’ utilization of publicly provided training vouchers to select the best, industry-recognized, certificate-granting training or education programs.

**Accountable:** Training providers are held accountable for job-placement and retention rates, employees’ earnings gains, and skill certifications that meet industry standards. These results are made public, and training providers who fail to meet performance standards are sanctioned or dropped.

**Customer-focused:** Employer-led workforce boards measure employer and employee/trainee satisfaction with the quality, relevance, and responsiveness of services. The boards also determine the reasons that some potential customers avoid using the workforce development system. Training and education providers know that their job is to meet business and workers expectations in serving individual workers.

**Responsive:** Built-in performance and customer-satisfaction measures provide data that employer-led workforce boards can use to continuously improve the system.

**Flexible:** Local workforce boards tailor services to meet the community’s skill needs. Waivers are sought to remove bureaucratic barriers, enabling One-Stop service systems to adapt quickly in a rapidly changing environment.

**Customized:** Customized training services—such as on-the-job, industry-specific and school-to-career training—meet specific needs of businesses of all sizes. One-Stop Career Centers convene training providers, community colleges, four-year colleges, and other postsecondary schools to tailor workforce solutions for a business.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Difficulty</th>
<th>Market Driven</th>
<th>Comprehensive</th>
<th>Portable</th>
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<td>Recommend business representatives for planning.</td>
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<td>Simplify use of public resources.</td>
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<td>Target resources to training initiatives that meet specific employer</td>
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