

Worknet

of Merced County
Employment Resource Center

Challenger Award Application for One-Stop Recertification 2005 – 2008



Merced County
Workforce Investment Board



2005 – 2008 Challenger Recertification Application Form
for Comprehensive Sites

Applicant:

Worknet of Merced County Employment Resource Center
1200 W. 16th Street
Merced, CA 95340
Phone: 209-724-2100
Fax: 209-725-3627

Highest Ranking Official:

Joanne Presnell, Assistant Director
1880 W. Wardrobe Avenue
Merced, Ca 95340
Phone: 209-724-2041
Fax: 209-725-3592
Email: jpresnell@co.merced.ca.us

Official Point of Contact:

Robin Redwine, Supervising Employment & Training Specialist
1200 W. 16th Street
Merced, CA 95340
Phone: 209-724-2040
Fax: 209-725-3627
Email: redwine@co.merced.ca.us

Authorized Signature:

Signature: **Joanne Presnell**, Assistant Director

Date: _____

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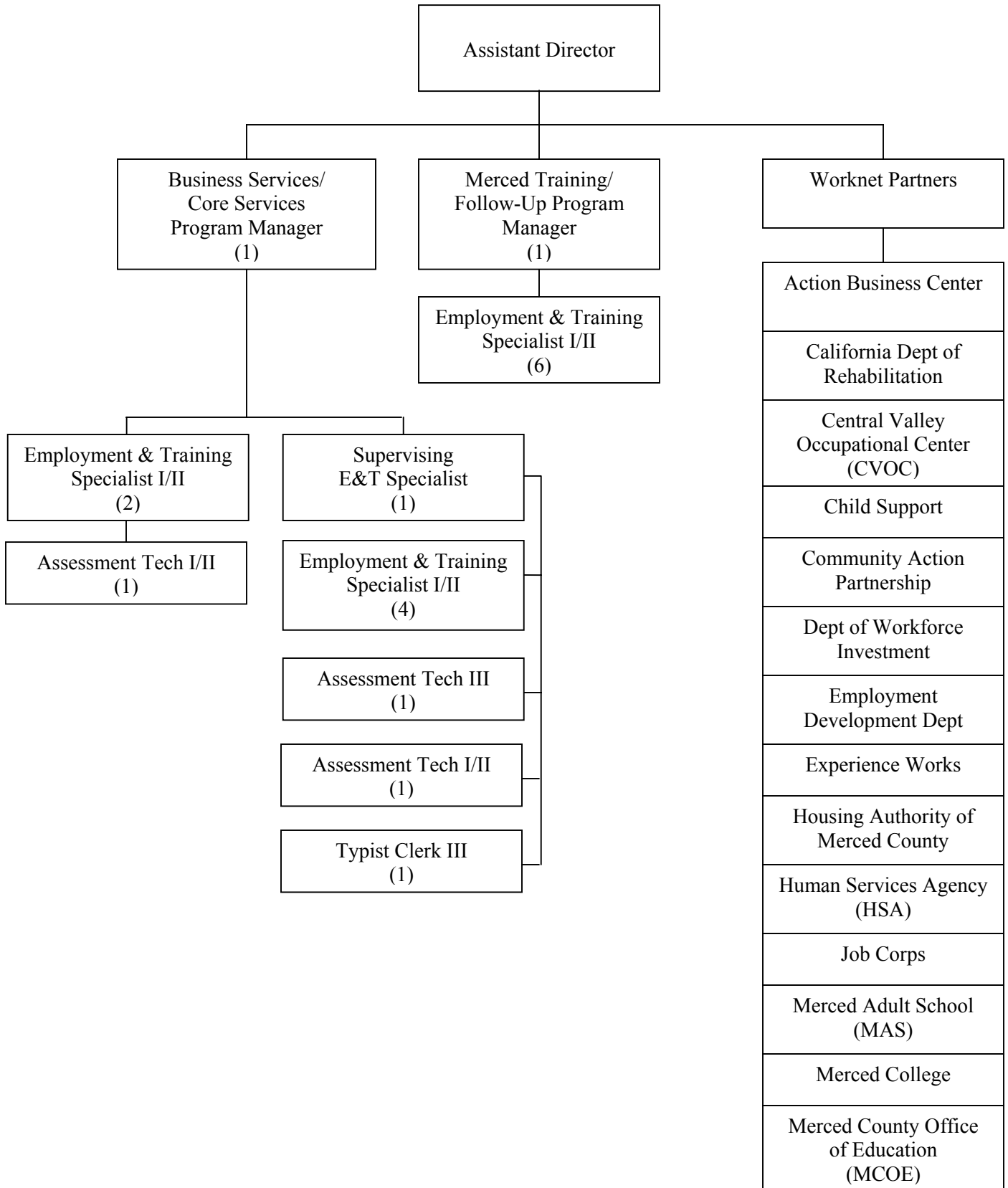
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Worknet Organizational Chart



Glossary

ABC	Action Business Center
ADA	Americans with Disabilities
BOS	.....	Board of Supervisors
CETA	.....	Comprehensive Employment Training ACT
CQI	.....	Continuous Quality Improvement
CSF	.....	Customer Satisfaction Form
CSS	.....	Customer Satisfaction Survey
DCR	.....	Director of Civil Rights
DOL	.....	Department of Labor
Dept of WI	.....	Department of Workforce Investment
EDD	.....	Employment Development Department
EDP	.....	Employment Development Plan
EOO	.....	Equal Opportunity Officer
EOPS	.....	Extended Opportunities Programs and Services
ERC	.....	Employment Resource Center
ETPL	.....	Eligible Training Provider List
GED	.....	General Education Diploma
IDP	.....	Individual Development Plan
IEP	.....	Individual Employment Plan
IT	.....	Information Technology
ITA	.....	Individual Training Account
ITP	.....	Individual Training Plan

JTPA..... Job Training Partnership Act
LAN Local Area Network
LMI..... Local Market Information
MCOE..... Merced County Office of Education
MIS..... Management Information System
MOU Memorandum of Understanding
NAWB National Association of Workforce Boards
OJT..... On-the-Job Training
OOR..... Occupational Outlook Report
PITD..... Private Industry Training Department
ROP Regional Occupation Program
SAGE..... System of Assessment and Group Evaluation
TTY Telecommunications Device
UI..... Unemployment Insurance
WAN..... Wide Area Network
WIA Workforce Investment Act
WIB Workforce Investment Board
WID Workforce Investment Division
WLT Worknet Leadership Team
WtW Welfare-to-Work

The Merced County Workforce Investment Board

Challenger Award Application
For
One – Stop Recertification 2005 – 2008

Compliance Criteria

A. Must provide all core services listed in the Workforce Investment Act, as described in Section 134(d)(2) of the Act.

1. Determination of whether individuals are eligible to receive assistance.

Eligibility determination is available for Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funded Core B, Intensive and Training Services for Adult and Dislocated Workers. Eligibility determination for other program services is also available at the Worknet Employment Resource Center (ERC). Examples of those program services include: Youth Services, Older Worker Services, Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Programs, Job Corps, and Wagner Peyser funded services delivered by the Employment Development Department (EDD).

2. Outreach, intake and orientation to information and other services available.

Outreach efforts to customers in Merced County include billboards, newspaper ads, job fairs, radio announcements, along with flyers and posters to announce events and services available at Worknet ERC. Partners, for example, Merced Adult School, provide brochures to customers; and also disseminate information about Worknet in their student orientations at its campus.

Intake information is gathered from customers utilizing Worknet Services. Information such as customer activity, types of services used, customer satisfaction, and outcomes are tracked.

Orientations to the Worknet system are held twice a week. Orientations are comprehensive and include information about the partners, resources, and services available from Worknet ERC.

3. Initial assessment of skill levels, aptitudes, abilities and support service needs.

Staff performs an initial assessment of the customers' skill levels, aptitudes, abilities, and support services required. Determinations are made of the following: 1) the reason why the customer is at Worknet, 2) identifying the services they want, and 3) which partner can best assist them. Initial assessment is accomplished by providing the customer with several tools to measure their skill levels, aptitudes, and abilities. For example, System of Assessment and Group Evaluation (SAGE), Career Navigator, Job Skills Office/Industrial, PLATO, and Mavis Bacon Typing Tutor are a few of the tools.

A portfolio is completed by the customer providing additional information, and is used to determine any assessment needs. An example of the types of information included in the portfolio are: educational level, work history, listing of transferable skills, career exploration, initial assessment of supportive service needs, including but not limited to, personal budget, childcare, and transportation.

4. Job Search, placement assistance and where appropriate career counseling.

At the Worknet ERC job search assistance is provided through a combination of resources. Internet based job search listings are used and include sites such as CalJobs, America's Job Bank, and Central Valley Jobs.com. Job announcements and fliers are posted. Daily newspapers with local job opportunities are also available. Workshops on job search related topics; for example, interviewing, resumes, applications and career planning, are conducted on a regular basis for jobseekers.

Placement assistance is available including information about employers recruiting through the partners. The types of employer information provided are position descriptions, information on job requirements, company benefits, and method of applying (resume, application, phone, fax, mail on-line, or in person). Official applications for City, County, Merit System, and School Districts are available for the convenience of jobseekers to utilize. Job Coaches provide information and assistance with resumes, applications, mock interviews, and interviewing tips. Job Coaches assist jobseekers by providing job leads and screening and referring appropriate candidates who meet the specific requirements of employers.

Career counseling for individuals as appropriate is provided by the mandatory partners. Merced County Office of Education (MCOE)/Regional Occupational Program (ROP) offers Career Exploration Workshops at Worknet ERC. The EDD's representatives provide the official labor exchange job search and placement services, both through workshops and individual counseling.

5. Employment statistics information for local, regional and national labor market areas including job vacancy listings, information on job skills necessary to obtain the jobs described in the clause, and local information relating to local occupations in demand and the earnings and skill requirements for such occupations.

Labor Market Information (LMI) is available to job seekers and employers in many formats. Access to local, regional and national labor market information is provided through the Worknet ERC computer lab on the Internet. The (EDD), Workforce Investment Board (WIB), Worknet and Department of Workforce Investment (Dept of WI) websites provide links to local, regional and national labor market areas. Information on job skills necessary to obtain an occupation is available through the local Occupational Outlook Report (OOR), which is on-line and in printed form. The OOR includes information on occupations in demand, earnings, skill requirements, education, experience, and benefits for such occupations. Each of the Workforce Investment Areas in California also provide similar labor market information through their OORs accessible on the EDD website. A link to another LMI resource is to America's Career Infonet that provides nationwide labor market information. America's Job Bank also provides nationwide job listings. There are workshops available at the Worknet ERC to educate customers on how to find and use LMI resources.

6. Provision of performance information and program cost information on eligible providers of training services.

Customers utilize computers in the center's computer resource lab to access the Eligible Training Providers List (ETPL) on the EDD website at edd.ca.gov. Customers may search by provider, training, and location. Information on program cost is also available on the website. There is also a list of the Eligible Training Providers specific to Merced County.

7. Provision of information regarding how the local area is performing on the local performance measures.

Information on the Merced Workforce Investment Area's performance in relation to local performance measures is available on the Dept of WI's website. Utilizing computers at Worknet ERC, customers can access performance information and staff are available for those who need assistance.

8. Provision of accurate information relating to the availability of supportive services including childcare and transportation available in the local area.

The Family Resource Council provides a Community Resource Directory that is updated yearly. It is available on-line and in hard copy. The Resource Directory is used to provide information about community support services. These include food, general assistance, health services, childcare resource and referral services, transportation, human services and veterans services. Worknet ERC staff provide information and facilitate referrals for supportive services. A brochure that summarizes the services most used is available as a handout to customers. The local Childcare Resource and Referral Agency provides brochures with information on programs they operate. There are also brochures that have bus routes and rates for the Merced County Regional Transit System.

9. Information regarding filing claims for unemployment compensation.

Unemployment Insurance (UI) Claim filing can be accomplished by utilizing the phones in the lobby of the Worknet ERC or on-line in the computer resource lab. Staff and partners are aware of the procedure for filing UI Claims. Brochures are available with the phone number and website. The EDD representative at the Worknet ERC will research individual questions regarding UI Claims and assist the customer in contacting a UI Benefits representative on a case-by-case basis. The EDD representative may enter comments or notes into the customers record to add or clarify information while assisting the customer with claim questions.

10. Assistance in establishing eligibility for welfare-to-work and programs of financial aid assistance for training and education programs.

There are no longer WIA Welfare to Work (WtW) funded programs. However, referrals are made to the Human Services Agency for training and/or educational programs.

11. Follow-up services, including counseling regarding the workplace, for participants in the workforce investment activities who are placed in unsubsidized employment for not less than 12 months (defined as applying to WIA only).

The Dept of WI has a follow-up unit that case manages an individual from the point of entering employment through the exit process. Follow-up is individualized, and is continued for not less than 12 months from obtaining unsubsidized employment. The WIA funded follow-up function provides counseling, supportive services to assist customers in retaining employment, and referrals to partner and community services.

B. Must provide access to intensive services. Must also provide access to training and serve as a point of access for Individual Training Accounts.

The Worknet ERC Operator, Merced County Dept of WI, provides access through staff-assisted core services to intensive and training services. The staff-assisted activity is defined as counseling and evaluation to determine whether the customer is in need of intensive services. The gateway to intensive services is the receipt of at least one core service. The gateway to training services is receipt of at least one intensive service. The local policy defines the development of the Individual Employment Plan (IEP) as the minimum intensive service that must be received prior to training and/or accessing Individual Training Accounts (ITA). ITAs are accessible for WIA registered customers. Customers desiring to access ITAs have an opportunity to research information on training by occupation, school and location through accessing the ETPL on computers at Worknet ERC. The ETPL also includes information on availability of financial aid, tutoring and handicap access.

Using the Department of Labor's (DOL) profile for skills, aptitudes, temperaments and physical requirements of a job, and comparing those requirements to the jobseeker's profile from their comprehensive objective assessment, customers are able to make informed choices about appropriate training.

C. Must provide access to all labor exchange services authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act.

Labor exchange services authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act are accessible at the Worknet ERC. A representative of the EDD is available at the Worknet ERC three days a week to provide authorized Wagner-Peyser labor exchange services.

D. Must provide the core services and access to all of the workforce programs and activities carried out by mandated One-Stop partners.

Worknet ERC, through the operator and partners, provides all of the 15 core services mentioned in the WIA. Core Services include but are not limited to: Title 1B eligibility determination; outreach, intake and orientation to Worknet; initial assessment of skill levels, aptitudes, abilities, and need for supportive services; employment statistics information including job vacancy listings, job skill requirements for job listings, information on demand occupations, performance information on eligible training providers, performance information on the local Worknet

system; information on supportive services and referral to supportive services; information regarding filing for UI compensation; resource room usage; Internet browsing (job, information and training searches); Internet accounts (Career Kit, Personnel Kit); initial development of Employment Plan; talent referrals (informational, e.g., talent scouts), referrals of jobseeker resumes to open positions; workshops and job clubs. Access to all Workforce Investment programs and activities is provided through the mandated partners' presence at the center or referral to partner programs in the system.

E. Additional Criteria for all comprehensive One-Stop Centers to be certified include:

1. High-speed computer access to Internet based information system.

Computers in the Worknet Computer Lab are connected to the Internet through a Local Area Network (LAN) Line, allowing high-speed access to Internet search engines and Internet based information.

2. Access to computers, including printing, access to software programs, which could include word processing programs for resume development and job application and cover letter preparation.

Software provided on the computers in the computer resource lab includes Mavis Bacon Typing Tutor, Microsoft Word 2000 as a word processing program for resume development, job application and cover letter preparation. WinWay Resume is also available for assistance in resume preparation. Access to computers especially equipped for individuals with special needs, such as physical/visual, is available at the Worknet ERC. Printing capability is available for all software. Printers are available to produce copies of cover letters, resumes, applications, and thank you letters.

3. Access to telephones and fax for job search.

An area in the Worknet ERC is provided for customers to use telephones for contacting employers and other job search activities. A fax machine is available for the customer to use as well as a photocopier that the customer may access for self-service or staff-assisted service. A specially equipped phone for individuals who are hearing impaired is also available for use at Worknet.

4. Access to up-to-date career and local community resource information.

Access to up-to-date career information is available through the Internet, and the OOR for Merced County. Linkage to job search hotlines is available on the computers as well as written materials in book, brochure and flyer format.

The Family Resource Council provides a Community Resource Directory that is updated yearly. The up-to-date information is available on-line and in hard copy. The Resource Directory is used to provide information about community resources.

A brochure has been developed that lists the providers of the most often used local community resources. This brochure is available for customers at Worknet ERC.

5. Strategies to meet any demand for “nontraditional” hours of operation for those who cannot attend during the 8 am–5 pm hours of operation.

Worknet is open from 7:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. five days a week. The center remains open during the lunch hour to accommodate those individuals that are working and cannot come in during traditional hours.

6. Information desk and/or resource areas are staffed.

There is a centrally located information desk in the center to assist customers in locating services they wish to access. The resource area is staffed to assist customers in locating information, operating computers, preparing for and proctoring skills testing for certification. Staff assistance in locating specific websites, operating peripherals such as printers, fax machines or locating printed materials for the specific needs of the customer is available in the resource area.

7. There is a presence of mandated partners on site.

The following mandated partners have a presence on site: Employment Development Department, Department of Workforce Investment, Title V Senior Employment Services/Experience Works, Job Corps, Central Valley Opportunity Center, California State Department of Rehabilitation, Merced County Office of Education, Merced College, Merced Adult School, Merced County Housing Authority, and Human Services Agency’s Title V Program.

8. A case management system exists that provides guidance for customers participating in intensive and training services.

A system of case management exists at Worknet ERC that provides guidance for the customer participating in intensive and training services. An individual customer is assigned an Employment and Training Specialist who is responsible for ensuring that the customer’s assessment is complete. Career counseling is provided, an Individual Employment Plan (IEP) is developed, and the plan is updated and monitored as the customer works toward their employment goal. The Employment and Training Specialist is the case manager and acts as a liaison between the customer and training activities personnel. The case manager will initiate paperwork to enroll the customer in appropriate activities and determine the need for supportive services. In concert with the customer, the case manager reviews and provides access to an Individual Training Account. The case manager tracks the progress of the customer, which is noted in the IEP. Upon completion of training and obtaining employment, follow-up case management is also provided to ensure retention in employment.

9. MOUs or operational agreements are in place between partners for daily operations.

Operational agreements are in place between partners at Worknet ERC that identify the policies and procedures for daily operations. The Worknet Leadership Team (WLT) developed and approved an Orientation for partners covering policies and procedures for daily operations. Individuals representing partners at the Worknet ERC receive an orientation that includes the policies and procedures for daily operations. The partner staff and manager/supervisor of Worknet ERC providing the orientation both acknowledge in writing that the orientation was completed.

10. Information sharing and customer confidentiality agreements exist.

As part of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreement, a Release of Information and confidentiality agreement is in place. Some partners have requirements that call for an additional release to be signed in order for the client information to be shared. The Information Survey completed by the customer on their initial visit to the center includes a consent to share information to document eligibility, and assist the individual in seeking and obtaining employment services. A confidentiality agreement exists between EDD and partners who access their CalJobs data bank, Employer Contact Management System and PASS, which is a participant case management system. Dept of WI staff, at hiring, also sign a confidentiality agreement.

11. A description of all employer services is included in the business plan, including strategies for making the information available to employers.

Worknet Business Services offers customized services for businesses in Merced County. These services include (but are not limited to):

- Referring qualified job applicants;
- Screening employment applications;
- Scheduling interviews for businesses; providing interview and orientation space to businesses;
- Providing assistance in capturing potential hiring tax credits;
- Providing structured testing for potential employers;
- Providing On-the-Job and Skills Upgrade Training to employees; and
- Provide liaison services for businesses to connect them with an agency or resource that can provide assistance.

The Vision of **Worknet Business Services** is: “To be the business solution for all businesses in Merced County to meet their workforce needs.”

The Mission is: “To provide access to and customize delivery of a wide array of quality services for businesses that meet their workforce needs.”

The Goals are:

- Increase the involvement of workforce development as an economic development strategy.
- Increase efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery to businesses that meet their workforce needs now and into the future.
- Increase communication with and personalized service to business to identify skill needs/gaps and build ways to address them.
- Increase awareness and relevancy of the system through focused marketing so businesses use Worknet as their first choice for getting their workforce needs (supply) met.
- Increase ease of access to the entire development system for businesses.

A strategy for accomplishing these goals has been developed and is reviewed annually. The strategies are as follows:

- Create a single point of contact by collaboration with partners who provide services to employers to ensure that there is no duplication and that the employers receive the appropriate service.
- Work in concert with Economic Development professional partners to assess employer needs and address them.
- Provide excellent customer service and respond in a timely manner to all business inquiries or needs.
- Develop a Marketing Plan to heighten awareness to employers about the single point of contact for business needs.

12. A customer assessment process exists, including skill, aptitude, interest, and needs assessment.

In addition to an initial assessment to identify what services the customer is in need of, a customer may access a number of comprehensive assessments. The Office Proficiency Assessment and Certification software tests individual skill and proficiency in Microsoft Applications. Job Skills software tests skill levels for a variety of software applications utilized in the Clerical and Industrial fields. The SAGE, developed by PESCO International, tests academic skills (reasoning, math, language); aptitudes (general learning, verbal, numerical, spatial, form perception, clerical perception, motor coordination, finger dexterity, manual dexterity, eye-hand-foot coordination and color discrimination. Learning styles, work attitudes, temperaments and work ethics can also be assessed through the SAGE system. A version for the visually impaired is available for customers with special needs.

Paper and pencil assessment tools available to customers are the Job Interest Inventory, Wide Range Interest and Opinion Test, Test of Adult Basic Education, and Ideas Interest Inventory. The assessment portfolio completed by the customer includes information on education/training, work history, personal budget, childcare, legal, transportation, and family issues. The information in the portfolio, combined with test results and a personal interview, complete the needs assessment.

13. Has established a referral process that is customer focused.

The Worknet referral process is included in the partner MOU's with the process being refined by the WLT. A common Interagency Referral form is used with the exception of agencies where health information requires a more specific definition of the information to be released. The referral process is a contact by telephone to the appropriate individual at an agency while the customer is at Worknet ERC. The customer is able to schedule an appointment, receive the required information, or have questions answered without leaving the building. A copy of the referral is sent with the customer that identifies the agency and address, reason for referral, contact person and name of staff from the referring agency. Worknet ERC staff referring the customer maintains a copy of the referral for follow-up.

Organizational Profile

P.1. Organizational Description

Describe your organization's business environment and your key relationships with customers, suppliers, and other partners.

P.1.a. Organizational Environment

What are your organization's main products and/or services? Include a description of how they are delivered to customers.

The WIA of 1998 envisioned a system where local elected officials, businesses, and public partners work together to shape a broader workforce development system that would result in increased efficiency and effectiveness. In Merced County the system is called Worknet. Under the WIA, accountability would no longer be just to the DOL or auditors, but to the customer and to the system. Requirements were new and introduced new challenges. Clearly the WIA presented a strong commitment to fundamentally refocus the entire system towards customer service and performance accountability.

In preparation of the new Act and its requirements, the Merced Chief Local Elected Officials and the Merced County Board of Supervisors (BOS) created the WIB on May 16, 2000. Merced County was designated as a Workforce Investment Area and implemented the WIA July 1, 2000, replacing the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) in providing federal job training programs to economically disadvantaged, unemployed individuals, and youth; access to information, referral to community resources, training, and job placement services. Merced County has had a long history of cooperation and collaboration among the various partners in the local Workforce Development System, first with the Comprehensive Employment Training Act, followed by the JTPA. Therefore, implementation of the WIA served to further enhance the level of cooperation and collaboration that already existed in the community.

Other aspects of the WIA included the promotion and development of seamless systems, collaboration and integration of services in education and employment, universal access to job search and LMI, program flexibility and simplicity of program access, and decrease and elimination of duplicate services. Collaboration, Consolidation, Universal Access, Core Measures, Intensive Training, Mandatory Partners, "One-Stop Center" and "No Wrong Door", were just a few of the new terminologies staff, partners, customers and other stakeholders began to learn.

The WIB designated the Dept of WI as the One-Stop Operator. The Dept of WI was faced with not only learning a different philosophy, but with also educating and training staff, customers, partners, and stakeholders. To acquire the foundation on which the new Act would stand, a solid and committed staff would have to be developed. Therefore, management, line staff, partners, education, and the business community worked in collaboration with a clear understanding that the transition would take time. To facilitate the process the Dept of WI set up a series of training opportunities for staff, managers, community members, educators, the business community and

other stakeholders. Training, planning, open communication, feedback, follow-up, and an evaluation process for effectiveness were essential elements in accomplishing the transition from the JTPA to the WIA.

There are two functions the Dept of WI is responsible for and they are:

1. **One-Stop Operator:** As the WIB and BOS designated One-Stop Operator the Dept of WI functions in collaboration with mandated partners and voluntary agencies to provide a wide array of employment and training opportunities with no fee to the job seeker customer. There are four primary functions provided: Core, Intensive, Training and Business Services.
2. **WIA Title I Administration:** The Dept of WI provides administration and direct support services to all WIA funded programs and functions to include: Marketing, Performance Excellence/Customer Service, LMI, Fiscal and Management Information Systems (MIS), and Information Technology (IT).

Merced County Worknet System: The Worknet system has two primary customers: businesses and jobseekers, which includes youth. Partners, Stakeholders, Local Elected Officials, Economic Development Agencies, Chambers of Commerce, and local taxpayers (community residents and businesses) represent internal and external customers. A comprehensive One-Stop Worknet ERC is located in Merced, with two affiliate sites operating in Los Banos and Livingston. Only the Merced Worknet ERC has been certified and is applying for recertification. Each Center provides Core, Intensive, and Training Services as required under WIA. Worknet has a Business Services Unit in Merced, which provides services to both the Los Banos and Livingston areas. Customers can receive services at any one of the locations.

- **Core Services** are available to all customers and include: Orientation to services, skills assessment, job search and placement assistance, LMI, access to job search equipment (telephones, fax machines, copier, and computers), adjustable tables and software for customers with special needs, communication system for deaf and hard of hearing customers (TTY Relay Service), access to eligibility for intensive and training services; information on availability of supportive services—such as assistance with transportation, childcare, reimbursement payments for tools, uniforms, Department of Motor Vehicle printouts, physicals, inoculations, tests, application fees, haircuts, books, multiagency referral process, performance and program cost of service providers, and filing unemployment insurance claims.
- **Intensive Services** are available to eligible customers who have received one Core Service and include: Comprehensive and specialized career assessment, an IEP, individual and group counseling, career planning, and case management. In addition, those eligible may receive supportive services previously identified in Core Services.
- **Training Services** are available to customers who have received one Intensive Service and have elected to pursue training. Customer choice is the focus. To ensure that customers make an informed decision, they are provided with information about the local

labor market, and are also provided with an occupational assessment to ensure that their job skills will be marketable in the local labor market. Customers select their training from the ETPL and at the same time activate their ITA. The customer is also eligible for assistance with supportive services including transportation, childcare, reimbursement payments for tools, uniforms, Department of Motor Vehicle printouts, physicals, inoculations, tests, application fees, haircuts, and books.

- **Business Services** are targeted to the business community and provide skilled candidates for available jobs, recruitment and placement assistance, information on Employer Tax Credits, Enterprise Zone Vouchers, Rapid Response assistance and information, incentives for providing On-the-Job Training (OJT), and referral to community resources and additional training services.

A new Lay-off Aversion Strategy is being planned and developed to include: a proactive approach in working with primarily small businesses by expanding services, an Early Warning System that will predict how business will be influenced by changes in the economy, a new website will be created for small business related services, a database to track business services, and an expanded collaborative of organizations that can assist a business with issues that they face. Business Services Representatives provide direct services and are liaisons between businesses and the organizations that provide the additional services they require.

What is your organizational context/culture? Include your purpose, vision, mission, and values, as appropriate.

The WLT provides broad oversight for Worknet and has representation from all of the WIA mandatory partners and voluntary partners. The current Chair and Co-Chair represent Merced College and the Dept of Rehab. The WLT meets at least monthly, and more often if required, to review customer usage, customer satisfaction data, customer needs, and services provided. They have established goals and objectives with timelines for completion.

Using the WIB's Mission and Vision statement as a foundation, the WLT, developed the Worknet system's Mission and Vision statement and revised it as follows:

VISION: To deliver a skilled, competitive workforce that ensures a diverse and prosperous economy.

MISSION: Worknet responds to the needs of our business community and jobseekers to enhance our community's quality of life.

The following core values were also established:

Integrity	Customer Service
Ethical Behavior	Growth
Teamwork	Results
Partnership	

What is your employee profile? Include educational levels, workforce and job diversity, bargaining units, use of contract employees, and special safety requirements, as appropriate.

There are 46 employees who staff the Worknet ERC. The Dept of WI provides indirect and direct employee services with 28 employees that support the daily operations of the Worknet ERC. The Director, Secretary II, two Automation Systems Analysts, a Marketing Specialist, and Fiscal/MIS Supervisor provide indirect services to the Worknet ERC. Staff providing direct services from the Dept of WI are the Assistant Director, two Program Managers, one Supervising Specialist, 12 Employment & Training Specialists, two Assessment Technicians, one Assessment Technician III, and one Typist Clerk II. The remaining 18 employees represent the other 13 Worknet partners who rotate staff into the ERC to provide core services as outlined in the MOUs with the WIB.

The other 13 partners who also provide Core “A” Services are: Merced Adult School, Merced College, State of California Department of Rehabilitation, Community Action Partnership, Merced County Office of Education/ROP, Employment Development Department, Central Valley Opportunity Center, Experience Works, Housing Authority, Job Corps, Action Business Center, Child Support and the Human Services Agency/Area on Aging Title V Program.

The Dept of WI is the lead agency in the Worknet system. The majority of staff members providing day-to-day services do so as part of their regular assigned duties. All staff employed by the Dept of WI have, at a minimum, a high school diploma. Several staff members at the management level possess graduate degrees, with the remainder of management possessing an undergraduate or Associate’s degree. Partner agencies all have minimum educational requirements that have been satisfied by their assigned staff.

An individual hired as an Employment & Training Specialist with the Dept of WI, at a minimum, must have an Associate’s degree, or 60 units of college credits that include classes related to the field of Employment & Training. There are no college requirements for Assessment Technician or clerical positions. However, work experience in the areas of eligibility determination is a necessity for an Assessment Technician. Computer knowledge and general office skills are essential elements for clerical positions.

Employment & Training Specialists provide direct customer service in the Worknet ERC as either a Job Coach, Job Developer, Case Manager, Workshop Facilitator, Business Services Representative or Up Front Specialist. Assessment Technicians provide support to Employment & Training Specialists prior to and during Job Club/Job Search Workshops, and during Orientations and Skills Assessment. Assessment Technicians assist in resume development, conduct eligibility, and provide direct clerical support where appropriate. All employees hired by the Dept of WI are County employees who successfully completed the employment process established by the County of Merced. There are no contracted employees in the Dept of WI.

The Dept of WI employees, and many of the partner agency employees, have union representation.

What are your major technologies, equipment and facilities?

Major technologies that provide support to the Worknet system include a LAN maintained by the Dept. of WI. Token ring and Ethernet protocol, one Novell file server, two Windows NT servers, and one Microsoft SQL server (version 6.5) are all part of the support package to the Worknet system directly or indirectly. The LAN is connected to a countywide area network (WAN) using T-1 links. The WAN is linked to an Internet Service Provider using a T-3 link. There are over 175 workstations on the WAN for personnel, partners, and customers in six different locations throughout Merced County.

Computer program environments currently in use are a combination of Windows 2000 and Windows 98. Worknet ERC staff have access to and are using Novell GroupWise 5.5 email and scheduling software. Employees are using MS Office 2000 productivity software. They are also using Microsoft Office 2000 productivity software. All employees are connected to the Internet and the Dept of WI Intranet. A Computer Lab exists at each site that provides One-Stop services. Customers are able to look for employment via the Internet, develop a resume, register with CalJOBS, and obtain a skills certification in typing, ten key, or general office skills. The PESCO SAGE Lab provides customers an opportunity to obtain a Skills Assessment for a better employment match. The PLATO Lab allows customers to upgrade their academic skills or prepare for a General Education Diploma (GED) certification.

In addition, the Dept of WI maintains a video conferencing network that includes six Polycom video conferencing units. The Worknet ERC is linked with a Dept of WI maintained Siemens-ROLM telephone system that includes call processing and voice mail.

Lap top computers and data/video projectors for PowerPoint presentations are available for use at the Worknet ERC. In addition, workstations, computers, and appropriate software were purchased to provide better service to handicapped and disabled customers.

The Worknet facility has a reception area, a computer lab with Internet access, a computer lab for assessment, and a third computer lab for basic skills improvement and GED preparation. There is a resource area with books, videos, and brochures for jobseeker use, and an area with job postings, phone bank, fax machine, copy machine, and tables where customers can complete applications or review the jobs listed in the newspapers. There are workspaces with computers for all of the partners.

What is the regulatory environment under which your organization operates? Include occupational health and safety regulations; accreditation requirements; and environmental, financial, and product regulations.

As the designated One-Stop Operator and a publicly funded organization, the Dept of WI is highly regulated by local, state, and federal agencies to ensure accountability of tax dollars spent. The regulator at the Federal level is the DOL. The State level regulator is the EDD Office of Workforce Investment Division (WID). There is a yearly Programmatic and Fiscal/Procurement Monitoring conducted by the WID. The Local regulators include the Merced County BOS, the Merced County WIB, and the Local Elected Officials for the City of Merced. The Dept of WI is

required to follow regulations established by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Equal Employment Opportunity, and local police, fire, and health and safety codes. Partners also have their own unique regulatory requirements.

P.1.b. Organizational Relationships

What are your key customer groups and/or market segments? What are their key requirements for your products and services? Include how these requirements differ among customer groups and/or market segments, as appropriate.

The primary customers of the Worknet system identified by the WLT are businesses and jobseekers, which include youth services and information can be accessed at the Worknet ERC or via the Internet.

Businesses receive services from several of the partners including applicant screening and referrals of skilled employees. A Worknet system goal is to provide a single point of contact for employers and jobseekers. WtW and Work Opportunity Tax Credit information, Enterprise Zone Tax Credit Vouchering, OJT, Upgrade OJTs, Customized Training, and Paid Work Experience are also provided. Rapid Response is a service available to both employers and jobseekers when a business is closing or downsizing. Rapid Response assists employers with placing affected employees in other jobs. Information about UI, Consumer Credit Counseling and Worknet services to aid in job search activities is provided. Where appropriate, staff travel to the location to provide an orientation and overview of services.

Jobseekers, which include youth, use the Worknet system to search for employment, improve basic skills, develop or enhance interviewing skills, to enhance or develop their work maturity or “Soft Skills”, which often aid them in Job Search, employment and retention. Workshops are available in Job Search, Interviewing, Resume Writing, and Dressing for Success. In addition, jobseekers have access to information via the Internet on employers hiring locally, statewide and nationally, and have the ability to contact those employers via the telephone and email. The PLATO Lab provides jobseekers an opportunity to upgrade their basic education skills, or prepare for their GED in English or Spanish. Services are provided via the computer with the assistance of a part-time instructor. Occupational skills assessment is provided through PESCO, a computer program that provides jobseekers with personalized reading, math, and language skill levels, aptitudes, and interests in specific occupations, thereby better preparing them with pertinent information for job search. In addition, youth services are provided by the Youth Contractor—MCOE for in-school youth, and for out-of-school youth.

Businesses and jobseekers access services through the Worknet system. Although they have different needs, they also have commonalities in their service requirements. Both customer groups require professional, timely, accurate information from knowledgeable, innovative and courteous staff.

What are your most important types of suppliers and dealers and your most important supply chain requirements? What are your key supplier and customer partnering relationships and communication mechanisms?

The key suppliers are also the key partners for the Worknet system and include education and training institutions, employers, all of the Worknet partners, and the County of Merced. Through formal financial agreements or contracts the suppliers provide services to the customers in the Worknet system. Education and training institutions provide occupational skills training to customers, and employers provide jobs, OJT, Upgrade OJTs, and work experience.

Communication mechanisms used throughout the Worknet system utilize a multitude of sources; including the Internet, Intranet, telephones, fax, and teleconferencing, monthly group meetings, and working sessions. The WLT and staff use each as appropriate for the desired results.

P.2. Organizational Challenges

Describe your organization's competitive environment, your key strategic challenges, and your system for performance improvement

P.2.a. Competitive Environment

What is your competitive position? Include your relative size and growth in your industry and the numbers and types of competitors. What are the principal factors that determine your success relative to your competitors? Include any changes taking place that affect your competitive situation.

The Dept of WI has provided over 25 years of employment and training services to the Merced community. The Worknet ERC was opened in 1995, and by 2000 had expanded to include all of the mandatory partners. Employment and training services are also available to the community at two additional Worknet affiliate locations, one in Los Banos and one in Livingston. California has 51 Workforce Investment Areas. Merced County does not compete with the neighboring One-Stop Centers for customers, but is in competition for state and federal discretionary funds. Over the years, the Dept of WI has established a strong working relationship with other Local Workforce Investment Areas. Information and coordination of services has resulted in successful outcomes for joint customers. The partnership with the other central valley workforce investment areas has been formalized and is called the Central California Workforce Collaborative. Joint research activities to help the DOL and others better understand the region has resulted in the California Workforce Association's cooperative venture in developing a Core "A" tracking system.

There are two primary competitors in the workforce investment system that market aggressively to workforce development organizations and/or the customers they serve. One is Associated Computer Solutions, which purchased Lockheed Martin, and is operating several One-Stops across the country. The other is the privately owned personnel agencies that offer placement services for jobseekers and employers. There is also potential competition from labor union

organizations such as the AFL-CIO because they are contemplating developing their own One-Stop systems.

Last program year 2003-2004, over 50,460 customers received services through the Worknet system. That is an increase of 7,845 from 2001-2002 program year when 42,615 customers were served. To meet the growing demands of businesses and jobseekers, computers and software were purchased and staff training was provided for Skills Assessment. The success of Worknet is a result of its effective collaboration with partners and suppliers, and its commitment to excellence. The WLT has reviewed and updated its Strategic Goals and Objectives to further focus and strengthen the partnerships. The WLT has developed timelines to ensure that the goals, objectives, and opportunities for improvement are being addressed. The plan will further identify, implement, and ensure that programs and systems are in place to reach Performance Excellence. The WLT is committed to developing staff and management, working to achieve excellent performance in every area of the organization, maintaining a clear and consistent message on customer focus and service, and keeping all stakeholders engaged in the process. A major step in the commitment to excellence was becoming a WIB Certified One-Stop Center in November 2003.

Worknet is pursuing entrepreneurial ventures and is looking at ways to fund activities that are demand driven. For example, a fee was developed to defray the costs of providing Enterprise Zone Vouchering. An ordinance to charge a \$40 fee for processing Enterprise Zone Vouchers was approved through the Merced County BOS. Additionally, the state is charging a \$10 per voucher fee.

P.2.b. Strategic Challenges

What are your key strategic challenges? Include operational, human resources, business, and global challenges, as appropriate.

In the recent Merced County Workforce Assessment Report, Phase II, prepared by the Chabin Concepts Team, it was determined that Merced County has specific and critical challenges with its workforce. Double-digit unemployment continues to plague Merced County. For the last 20 years the Merced County unemployment rate has been significantly higher than the state, San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Madera Counties, and in 2004 was ranked 52 out of 58 counties. The County suffered economically by the closure of Castle Air Force Base in 1995, followed by the relocation of Farmers Insurance Group in 1998. Employment associated with agriculture was unaffected, then and now. Other challenges include a lack of industry to support workforce, a low skilled workforce and a young workforce (with the lowest median age of 29). Technology is involved in almost every aspect of the operation of businesses today. Technical skills by current employees along with basic job ready skills of entry-level employees have been major concerns for local employers. In order for Merced County to be competitive it must improve the technical literacy, reading and math skills, management, computer, chemical and material related, commercial skills, and critical decision-making skills of its current and emerging workforce. Other strategic challenges include the high numbers of adults who lack a High School Diploma or GED, the mobility of migrant workers, shortage of housing, lack of affordable housing,

salaries not competitive with other areas and the resulting emigration of highly educated, highly skilled professionals, resistance to change, and the current unstable economy.

The Merced County State of the Workforce report published March 2005, for the previous year, further substantiates the workforce crisis that exists in Merced County with a focus on implications for action in Economic Development, Workforce Housing, and Education that address the regional strategic issues.

Although determined to be an undercount by the Department of Finance, the 2000 Census shows an increase in population of 18% from 178,403 to 210,554. The Merced County Association of Governments projects that the population will increase 30% (from 210,554 to 273,923) by 2010. According to the EDD, the estimated labor force in Merced County was 84,900 as of July 2002. As of July 2004 the labor force was 98,160, employment was 87,990, unemployment was 10,170, and the unemployment rate was 10.4%.

An operational challenge, common across the nation, is that mandatory partners are required by law to participate in cost sharing agreements to support the infrastructure of Worknet. This requires partners to pay for rent, utilities and other infrastructure costs as it applies to their proportional share. However, (with the exception of the Dept of WI) dollars are not designated in the individual partner's budget for this expense. The result is an unfunded mandate that, while required by law, does not include a financial provision.

Another challenge faced by Worknet is the California budget deficit that will impact every participating partner. Declining funds will equate to less dollars for services and staff. In spite of these funding challenges the WLT maintains a strong commitment to effectively and efficiently serve the Merced community.

The WIA is also in the midst of reauthorization, which could bring many changes to the existing law. There was a funding decrease of approximately 30% in Program Year 2002-2003 with DOL appropriations being flat for last year and for 2005-2006. There was a 4.4% decrease in funding for 2005-2006 from the state through a formula to the local Workforce Investment Area. Dollars continue to decline as the need for services increases. Maintaining and increasing services for our customers with less resources is a challenge.

P.2.c. Performance Improvement System

How do you maintain an organizational focus on performance improvement? Include your approach to systematic evaluation and improvement of key processes and to fostering organizational learning and knowledge sharing.

An example of organizational focus on performance improvement is the current Worknet Customer Satisfaction Survey (CSS), which has an area for customer comments and when a reply is requested, or dissatisfaction is noted, appropriate staff from the Worknet ERC follow up with the customer. This information is kept in a database and is reviewed by the WLT at its meetings. Comment Cards are used to obtain additional customer feedback. They are available at all times so that it will be convenient for customer use.

After the WLT received the feedback report, workgroups were formed to address opportunities for improvement identified. Each team was comprised of management and line staff with different areas of focus with all of the Worknet partners participating. Each team is accountable for its work and outcomes. The workgroups were also responsible for updating and addressing their particular category in the recertification application. The WLT values and embraces the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process to address performance issues.

As with all valued measurements, the effectiveness of the Worknet system is measured quantitatively and qualitatively. CQI is fundamental to the Worknet system. The WLT has and continues to use the mechanisms in place developed by the One-Stop Operator to continuously refine and improve business practices and response to feedback provided through the use of the Day Pass Customer Service and Satisfaction Survey Data System. Qualitative factors that indicate the effectiveness of the WLT include:

- Continued and consistent messages throughout the Worknet system on quality objectives.
- Review and response to customer feedback.
- Proven commitment to continuous improvement.

Quantitative measures of the impact of services provided to the community through the Worknet system:

- Participant & Employer Satisfaction Performance measures.
- Credential Attainments (Training & Education).
- Entered Employments (Unsubsidized).
- Retention.
- Increased earnings.

Another important tool in CQI is communication, whether formal or informal. Information must be disseminated through all levels in an organization with open dialogue to have staff buy-in that ultimately leads to staff driven action. To support this process there is a commitment from the WLT to have monthly meetings that include the decision makers for each organization, and all partners are encouraged to attend. There are also monthly Partner meetings for line staff. All parties are encouraged to bring forth issues for discussion. Key processes are reviewed and refined through the workgroups and brought to the WLT meeting for consensus. Training then takes place at the WLT and Partner meetings.

Baldrige Based Criteria

1. Leadership

1.a. Clear Direction (consistent) (mission)

There exists a clear, well-articulated Mission Statement for the organization.

The WLT developed the Mission Statement over three years ago during a facilitated assessment process. This process included partners and management staff of the One-Stop Operator. The Dept of WI is the local One-Stop Operator. The original mission and vision statements were refined and adopted March 2005 by the WLT. They are printed on all WLT correspondence and are posted on the WLT website.

Worknet line staff and dedicated partners have taken further steps to learn the Mission, Vision, and Core Values. During staff meetings, the staff has discussed how their daily work implements the mission and integrates the core values while seeking to accomplish the vision. Copies of the mission, vision and core values are prominent in cubicles, on walls, by computers, and in the resource room. The statements and core values are reflected below.

Mission Statement: Worknet responds to the needs of our business community and job seekers to enhance our community's quality of life.

Vision Statement: To deliver a skilled, competitive workforce that ensures a diverse and prosperous economy.

Core Values: Integrity, ethical behavior, teamwork, partnership, customer service, growth and results.

The agenda of the monthly Worknet Staff Partners' Meeting includes time for discussion on the activities that are promoting the accomplishment of the mission, vision and core values. Partner staff is given an opportunity during each session to provide information regarding their programs, services and announcements of changes or events.

1.b. Quality One-Stop Staff (continuous learning)

A formal education/employee development plan exists. If certification is required for certain employee groups, those certifications exist and are current.

An orientation of Worknet Policies and Procedures is provided to assist both partner staff and the One-Stop Operator staff in learning about daily activities and expectations of staff assigned to the Worknet ERC. The managers of the Worknet ERC provide a tour and the orientation to newly assigned staff. In order to track that staff has received this orientation, a form has been developed for staff to sign upon completion of the orientation. A copy of the form is given to staff for their record, and a copy is kept in a partner information file maintained by Worknet ERC management.

The WLT had planned to develop its own certification utilizing talent within the local system and based on the competencies required by National Association of Workforce Development Professionals. The plan was implemented in the fall of 2003. One-Stop staff input resulted in a reevaluation of the local certification plan. The WLT workgroup on Human Resources researched available national certifications for Workforce Development Professionals and recommended the on-line course offered by Dynamic Works Institute that meets the 13 competency areas. (ref. 5b. page 42.) The WLT has approved an on-line course for National Workforce Professional Certification. The One-Stop Operator has made a commitment to offer this training to individuals staffing the Worknet ERCs. The course is self-paced. Initially ten staff members were enrolled in the fall of 2004. Nine of the first ten staff members have completed the course work and have taken the National Workforce Professional Tier I Certification Exam. All nine have received their National Professional Tier I Certification with competencies ranging from 96-100%. Twelve additional staff members were enrolled in November 2004 and six more began March 2005, for a total of twenty-eight employees participating in the certification. Partner staff has been offered the opportunity to fill additional slots. Each student has six months to complete the Tier I Certification. Time is provided during work hours to study the course work and complete the certification.

Certification is required for our basic education instructor in the PLATO Lab. The instructor is credentialed. The credential verification is the responsibility of the parent agency (Merced Adult School).

1.c. The “right” organization and well-defined organization

There is an organizational chart. The organizational structure is appropriate for the organization. All leadership positions are filled.

The designated One-Stop Operator, Dept of WI, continues to be responsible for monitoring and maintaining the day-to-day operations of the facility with direction from the WLT. This includes, but is not limited to, staffing the PESCO Lab (SAGE Assessment System, Job Skills Assessment), Computer Lab, Resource area, PLATO Lab (Educational Assistance) all Core “A” Universal Access Services, Intensive, and Training Services. The three leadership positions at the Worknet ERC are filled and consist of two Program Managers and one Supervising Employment and Training Specialist.

MOUs exist between the WIB and all of the mandatory partners and volunteer agencies. In the MOUs each partner agrees to provide core services, work a certain number of hours, and provide a level of staffing. The hours of participation by partners at the Worknet ERC vary from 1-40 hours a week.

The WLT developed a Core Services Matrix that identifies the core services that are provided by all of the participating partners. This matrix has been updated and expanded to include intensive and training services. Additionally, a time study form has been developed and implemented to verify the time partner staff spends providing core services at the Worknet ERC.

1.d. Customer focus

There is an understanding/definition of the customer(s). A customer service-training program exists.

The WLT has defined the Worknet ERC customers as jobseekers, which include youth, and the business community. Partner staff is held accountable for maintaining the same levels of customer service as the One-Stop Operator staff. Customer service expectations are communicated to partners and partner staff by the One-Stop management staff through the orientation process and day-to-day supervision of partner staff activities. In addition, partner meetings are held on the third Thursday of every month. At this time, customer satisfaction data and customer service issues are discussed, and additional customer service training is provided.

A staff-training calendar has been developed for all staff meetings. The Worknet ERCs will be closed for every bimonthly meeting so that all staff and partners may attend. All staff meetings are scheduled bimonthly. Training content includes both mandatory subjects and those subjects which are provided in response to stated staff needs.

Training related to customer service has been available to staff. Merced College has an ongoing series of courses through their Customer Service Academy. Dept of WI staff and partner staff have taken these courses to improve their customer service skills. Additionally, staff has been referred to these courses as a part of their IEP for capacity building skills.

In order to evaluate our progress and address any deficiencies in delivery of service the customer satisfaction survey is provided for feedback. Any negative comments are followed by a call to the customer to determine how a situation might be corrected or improved. The CSSs are also utilized to identify and improve or expand services requested by customers.

CSS results are used not only to verify observed trends and needs, but also to identify areas of strength and weakness. The survey's feedback resulted in the addition of staff and computers to the computer lab; increased monitoring of appropriate telephone usage, photocopying, faxing and increased calling area access. Customers are called individually if they indicate a problem area and write their name and phone number on the survey.

Understanding our differences as well as those things we have in common contribute to better delivery of customer-focused services. Customer service, diversity, and general helping skills are three of 13 areas required as part of the National Workforce Professional Certification. These three areas provide specific information and techniques in dealing with issues involved in providing quality customer service to the diverse population utilizing the services of the One-Stop Center.

1.e. Focus on collaboration

All the mandatory partners participate at the Worknet ERC on a regular basis. The rate of cross-referral among the partners is satisfactory relative to benchmark organizations. The degree of informational sharing among Worknet partners is adequate.

Each partner has made a commitment to participate at the Worknet ERC and use a common referral process through the MOUs. The MOUs provide guidelines on how the partner will operate at the Worknet ERC. The Dept of WI Monitoring Unit reviews the participation each year, and a report on the findings, recommendations and commendations are provided to the partnering agencies to make corrective action or revise the MOU to reflect the actual level of participation.

The cross-referral process which is now called the Interagency Referral process was examined by the WLT's Process Management CQI workgroup. The Worknet Interagency Referral form has been revised with accompanying instructions by the workgroup and was adopted by the WLT. The form has been placed on the WLT's website for easy access for partners and Worknet staff.

A process was established in December 2004 to track Interagency Referrals. Each partner records and tracks referrals. Tracking information includes date, name of customer, referring agency/individual, agency referred to and results. The system is designed so that the referring agency receives a reply to the referral. The WLT's Strategic Goals facilitate the ability to establish baseline data for referrals.

Opportunities exist for partners to share information at the WLT meetings, partner meetings and staff meetings. The partners have developed an information sharing binder, which is updated on a quarterly basis or more often as changes in hours, services, or program information occur. There is a binder at every partner workstation.

1.f. Support for continuous quality improvement

A well defined CQI plan and program exists. Staff are trained in the principles of CQI. There is a commitment of employee time to the CQI process.

The One-Stop Operator made a commitment to CQI during the early days of the WIA. Training was provided for staff members to become examiners for the Baldrige Based California Awards for Performance Excellence. Trainers were brought in for all staff and partners to learn to apply the Baldrige Criteria as team members and as workgroup facilitators. The management team received additional training and practice in implementing these principles while providing the organizational tools to address opportunities for improvement.

The WIB members and WLT members were provided with training, which has been repeated at least twice in order to allow new members to become familiar and to endorse the principles of CQI.

Ten Dept of WI staff and one partner staff from Merced College attended the June 14, 2005 training for the WIB examiners to better understand the recertification process and performance excellence.

The CQI plan includes workgroups that are continuous, and others convened only for the purpose of resolving a particular opportunity for improvement.

While the original CQI teams were Dept of WI initiated, the six teams established by the WLT during the past two years have demonstrated their commitment to respond to both the internal and external customer. The current CQI teams were developed in response to the feedback report from the last application for certification. Among the accomplishments made as a result of the CQI workgroups are: 1) A new referral form, procedure and tracking system; 2) new materials for marketing our services to the business community as well as jobseekers; 3) a certification process to provide consistent capacity building opportunities and recognition for staff accomplishments; 4) revision of the mission, vision; 5) customer friendly services sign-in sheet; 6) new CSS process; and 7) goals to reflect those things that can be demonstrated in the daily activities of the Worknet ERC and system as a whole.

1.g. Supplier certification

Key performance factors are used in the evaluation of suppliers and partners.

A majority of the services provided to customers are universal services. The partnering agency provides certification that the staff provided to the ERC has the skill required to perform the job. Each partner staff member is provided with an orientation to the services including the policies and procedures for providing core services.

Key factors used to evaluate partners are the CSS, Service Hours Log, and observations made by the One-stop Operator. The One-Stop Operator notifies partners if there are performance issues with staff from their agency. Monthly feedback is provided as requested.

Program performance factors differ for each partner. WIA-based performance criteria is in the process of change through reauthorization. Several of the partners will be affected by this change. Currently, WIA performance factors include entered employment, credential rate, goal attainment, and retention. Cost per placement is another factor in performance for WIA-funded partners.

The education community has criteria that are unique to their industry. Accreditation from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges is an evaluation of the performance of our educational partners: MCOE, Merced Adult School, and Merced College.

Customers interested in enrolling into a training program are asked to review the ETPL for State and WIB approved training providers. Annually, the One-Stop Operator monitors the training providers that have students enrolled in their programs. During site visits the students/trainees are interviewed, and results of any findings are referred to the One-Stop Operator's management

team. Corrective action is taken prior to any further enrollments in that particular facility or training program.

2. Strategic Planning

2.a. Well-defined

There exists a well-defined strategic plan with measurable objectives.

The WLT has evaluated and updated its Strategic Goals, which align with the goals of the WIB. The Merced County WIB developed the following goals:

Goal One:

Train and attract adaptable workers to fill industry needs.

- Focus on a single industry; do a pilot project, which will focus on understanding and addressing its needs.
- Develop a focus group for that industry to identify needs.
- Formulate a plan to address the needs of that single industry.
- Implement the plan.

Goal Two:

Influence the K-12 education system to design and implement strategies that provide students knowledge of employee skills and attitudes and develop metrics to assure success.

Goal Three:

Become an active advocacy voice and take political action on workforce development issues at the local, state, and national levels.

- Create the story with a talking piece, an agenda platform of the issues.
- Develop a tiered strategy for public awareness for students and parents, business, and local and state elected officials.
- Public awareness and engagement.

With the WIB's goals in mind, the WLT updated its Strategic Goals and completed this process on March 8, 2005. Stakeholders, partners and staff reviewed the Strategic Goals and provided input. The new goals incorporated the essence of the previous goals and are more clear with objectives that can be more readily measured. The WLT has identified four Strategic Goals to guide its work over the next three years. The goals lead the strategic direction in support of the WIB goals. They are: 1) Staff, 2) Leadership, 3) Jobseekers, and 4) Business Services. The objectives are the milestones for accomplishing the goals.

Goal One: Staff

Empower and develop staff that can effectively assess and meet customer needs.

Objective #1: Staff is provided regular updates and training of the Information Sharing Tool, the Worknet of Merced County Partner brochure, the Community Resource

Directory, and other links through the Worknet website. Customer Service and Satisfaction information will be shared at partner meetings.

Measure: Training at partner and WLT meetings as verified through agendas and sign-in sheets.

Timeline: Ongoing

Objective #2: Staff uses the Interagency Referral process to meet customer needs. Awareness and training in Interagency Referrals will be provided at partner and WLT meetings on a biannual basis.

Measure: Report the number of referrals at partner and WLT meetings on a quarterly basis.

Timeline: Ongoing

Objective #3: Staff is provided professional certification opportunities through the Dynamic Works Institute National Certification Course.

Measure: Five staff will have completed certification by June 30, 2005, with five additional staff completing per year thereafter.

Timeline: Ongoing

Goal Two: Leadership

Assess and meet Worknet system needs.

Objective #1: Nurture and strengthen relationship of Worknet partners. This is accomplished by:

- As a regular agenda item at WLT meetings, partnering agencies, on a rotating basis, will conduct presentations on their respective services and eligibility requirements in serving customers.
- As a regular agenda item at WLT meetings, partnering agencies will share the latest happenings of their respective organizations in a roundtable format.
- At least biannually, a topic discussion of identifying and inviting potential new partners to assist in the mission and goals of the Worknet system will be addressed. As potential new partners are identified, they will be invited to attend WLT meetings.

Measure: Partner and WLT meeting agendas and minutes.

Timeline: Ongoing

Objective #2: Develop and implement strategies to accomplish the strategic goals.

Measure: Calendar objectives that need to occur on a monthly/quarterly/biannual/annual basis.

Timeline: Ongoing

Objective #3: Successfully complete the Recertification application/process and obtain Certification from the Merced County Workforce Investment Board.

Measure: Certification by WIB

Timeline: October 31, 2005

Objective #4: Use the Feedback report from the WIB and customer service and satisfaction information to identify additional opportunities for improvement.

Measure: Workgroup outcomes, Recertification process, and publicly post notice of improvement resulting from customer service and satisfaction recommendations.

Timeline: Ongoing

Goal Three: Jobseekers

Assist job seekers to be fully prepared for the labor market

Objective #1: Provide staff and resources including equipment such as access to computers, fax machines, Internet, CalJobs, and telephone.

Measure: Number of staff assigned and resources provided to Core A is adequate based on customer service satisfaction information.

Timeline: Ongoing with quarterly review.

Objective #2: Provide information and access to resources to increase employability including assessment tools like SAGE and Eureka, and workshops such as Survive and Thrive in the Workplace, Free Application to Federal Student Aid, Customer Service Academy, Job Search workshop, resume preparation workshops, ETPL, LMI, Career Counseling and other resources.

Measure: Schedule made available through calendar of events.

Timeline: Ongoing with monthly updates.

Objective #3: Collaborate with partners to provide academic, career-technical resources, and employment resources and referrals.

Measure: WLT Matrix of services, and Interagency Referral process

Timeline: Ongoing with annual review of Matrix. Quarterly review of Interagency Referral numbers.

Goal Four: Business Services

Assess and respond to business needs (employer)

Objective #1: Provide information and access to economic incentive opportunities including tax credits, Enterprise Zone vouchers, WOTC, and WtW. Provide On-the-Job Training opportunities and upgrade skills training.

Measure: WLT Matrix of services

Timeline: Ongoing with annual review of Matrix.

Objective #2: Provide information and access to human resource needs including taking job orders, assisting in job referrals, application screening, and providing interview space.

Measure: WLT Matrix of services

Timeline: Ongoing with annual review of Matrix.

Objective #3: Provide information and access to customized services including access to SCORE services, Rapid Response, and customized training.

Measure: WLT Matrix of services

Timeline: Ongoing with annual review of Matrix.

2.b. Involvement of all constituents

Stakeholders possess knowledge of the elements of the strategic plan. There is documented evidence that all levels of the organization and all stakeholders participated in the development of the strategic plan.

At the September 2004 WLT meeting, the Chair recommended that the goals be revisited to make them more understandable and meaningful and the membership agreed. The WLT reviewed the goals and formed a workgroup which consisted of staff from Merced Adult School, MCOE, Merced College, and the Dept of WI. The workgroup met in November 2004 and reviewed and revised the Strategic Goals, so that they were updated and aligned to what the Worknet partners and WIB are trying to accomplish. For the December 2004 WLT meeting, partners and stakeholders were required to invite and have line staff in attendance, so that there would be input from all levels of the partner organizations. With participation from a cross section of management and line staff, there was consensus reached on the Strategic Goals and Objectives.

The small workgroup convened again in January 2005 and drafted the expanded goals. These were presented during the WLT's January 2005 meeting, with measures and tentative timelines for review, discussion, input and editing. The proposed changes were agreed upon through consensus. At the February 2005 WLT meeting, the expanded goals were distributed for review and recommendations. During February 2005 the expanded Goals, Mission and Vision were provided to all staff for their review, input and recommendations. It was also a topic at the Dept of WI's All-Staff meeting. Staff were provided a template for their reply where they identified their acceptance of, or recommendations for, the Strategic Goals, the Mission statement and the Vision statement. Staff replies are on file.

On March 8, 2005, with all recommendations considered, the Goals, Mission and Vision were finalized. Several opportunities were provided for partner, stakeholder and staff input to the process. The participating agencies were: Dept of Commerce; Aviation and Economic Development; Employment Development Department; Merced Adult School; California State Department of Rehabilitation; Central Valley Opportunity Center; Experience Works; Housing Authority; Human Services Agency; Job Corps; Merced College; Merced Community Action Partnership; Merced County Office of Education; and Department of Workforce Investment.

Through this extensive development process, all stakeholders, partners and staff were able to participate and, thus, have knowledge and ownership of the Strategic Goals/Plan, and the Mission and Vision of Worknet.

2.c. Customer focus (needs-now and in the future)

A formal customer needs assessment has been performed. The results of the needs assessment are addressed in the strategic plan.

Jobseekers:

Customer satisfaction and needs assessment are currently collected via the Worknet ERC CSS and the Services Sign-In Sheet. Customers sign in and check the services they will be using that day, and also have an opportunity to complete a CSS as they exit the facility. The services and equipment that are used are tracked in a database, and reports are provided and reviewed on a monthly basis. These reports are provided to the WIB, WLT, partner meetings, staff, and the Dept of WI Management Team.

CSSs are available in both English and Spanish, and are placed in multiple locations throughout Worknet. This survey provides customers an opportunity to comment on services they received during their visit, make recommendations for additional services and share any concerns or issues. For example, through the use of the CSS customers were able to convey their displeasure with the length of time they were having to wait for staff assistance in the Computer Lab, which is the most widely used area of the One-Stop. As a result, two additional full-time staff members were assigned to the Computer Lab to address customer needs.

Another means to obtain customer feedback is through the use of a Customer “Comment Card” entitled, “We Care What You Think” that is easily accessible for our customers to take and complete at their leisure. Customers are encouraged to return it at a later date or mail it. Information is reviewed and addressed by the WLT on a monthly basis.

Businesses/Employers:

The various partners conduct needs assessments on an ongoing basis primarily through advisory committees. The committees meet regularly, depending on program requirements. Merced Adult School, MCOE, and Merced College meet with businesses regularly to get input regarding their employee and training needs. These partners, along with the Dept. of WI, also have individual meetings with employers to discuss issues, concerns and needs that they have, and to work toward providing information and solutions.

The Business Services Unit has developed and implemented a CSS that is used when a business is contacted and services are provided. Feedback is requested on the following: The information they received, courtesy of staff, quality of facility/programs, how they heard about Worknet, would they recommend our services to other businesses, and to request additional services they would like to see us provide. Information is reviewed and discussed with the unit to determine how services could be improved.

2.d. Define metrics (are they measured)

Outcomes and a method to measure them are identified in the plan. Milestones exist for achievement of outcomes.

The Strategic Goals have objectives, measures and timelines. There are outcomes and methods to measure each goal that has been identified. The objectives listed under each goal serve as milestones for achieving the goals. The Worknet Balanced Scorecard Strategic Goals/Plan describes in specific terms how and when the goals and objectives will be met, to include metrics, measure, timeline, and responsible person/organization.

2.e. Implemented (organizational behavior)

There is evidence that the strategic plan is being implemented in the organization.

The infrastructure for the Strategic Plan was developed and updated March 2005 by the WLT with input from all stakeholders, partners and staff, and is fully supported by all. The WLT goals are discussed regularly at WLT and Partner meetings and at staff meetings.

Goals and Objectives will be reviewed by the WLT as determined by timelines. Cross training of partners, Interagency Referral Process, Operational Agreements, Worknet Policies and Procedures, the Employee Individual Training Plan, the development of a Staff Certification Process through Dynamic Works Institute, and the development of a “Fact Sheet” are all examples of goals and objectives from the Strategic Plan that have already been implemented into the daily operations of the Worknet ERC. The WLT is committed to continuously reviewing and assessing the plan and its progress.

2.f. Consistent with available resources

The organization has sufficient resources to implement the plan.

Implementation of the Strategic Plan does not require specific funding or additional resources. Collaboration and review of information available will be essential to accomplishing the goals presented. Primary partners responsible for providing data and information to determine if goals and objectives have been met will be Merced College, Merced Adult School, MCOE, Dept of WI and EDD.

2.g. Includes continuous quality improvement plan

The strategic plan includes an emphasis on CQI.

Goal 2, Objectives 3 and 4 of the Strategic Goals specifically address CQI (pages 30-31). First by completing the application and recertification process to be certified for an additional 3 years. At the center of preparing for recertification are the cross-functional/cross-organizational workgroups that have been formed to address the Opportunities for Improvement that the WIB Examiners identified in the Feedback Report for the initial certification.

There are six workgroups that have been meeting. They include 1) Leadership/Strategic Planning, 2) Human Resources, 3) Customer and Market Focus, 4) Process Management, 5) Information and Analysis, and 6) Business Results. The teams have developed, improved and implemented a myriad of processes that include, but are not limited to:

- Gathering and tracking of participant statistics,
- Improving the referral process,
- A professional certification through Dynamic Works Institute,
- Increased marketing services to businesses, jobseekers and the overall community.

Workgroups meet weekly or monthly, depending on the individual group goals that were established.

3. Customer Market Focus

3.a. Customer Needs Surveyed

There is evidence that customer needs have been surveyed/identified.

The WLT defined customers as jobseekers and employers/businesses. Regular customer feedback is critical to any CQI program. By gathering, aggregating, and analyzing customer feedback, Worknet ERC staff have shown steady improvement in meeting customer needs. Services are designed based on the identified needs, expectations, and preferences of customers.

Worknet uses a variety of formal and informal methods to listen and learn from customers, and determine key customer requirements. Worknet ERC staff has direct access to a wide range of information that determines the needs and requirement of customers. During the Assessment process, home life, work history, education, and economic situations are discussed and taken into consideration when determining the level of service, readiness for the workplace, and ability of the customer to complete training agreements.

Customer requirements are also validated through formal methods such as Staff Assisted Services Sign-In, CSS and through the monitoring of processes such as the IEP, which is completed for each enrolled participant. The IEP delineates customer needs and requirements to reach their employment goal. Informal methods are used to evaluate and discuss customer requirements; i.e., meetings with ERC staff, WLT workgroup/team meetings, general WLT meetings, and Dept of WI management meetings. In addition to meetings, e-mail, memos, Intranet and Internet are used. Customer needs and requests are considered in order to streamline processes, develop products and services, and revise/develop program policies and procedures to meet those requirements.

Additional information obtained and validated through formal methods of listening and learning are combined with the CSS completed by jobseekers. Customer Satisfaction data is also collected from participants in vocational skills training and OJT to identify program effectiveness in providing quality customer services.

For example, feedback from customers prompted changes that were implemented at the front counter, which reduced the amount of paperwork required prior to receipt of service. Customers were required to complete the following: Customer Use Agreement, Equal Employment Opportunity, Universal Tracking Information, Informational Survey, Sign-In Sheet, and the Day Pass. While customers were compliant, they occasionally left due to all of the paperwork required to use the phone, computer lab, copier, or fax machine. To respond to customer needs, a new process was developed through the efforts of the Customer Service Unit, Dept of WI front-line staff and the WLT. The collaboration brought about the implementation of the Staff Assisted Sign-In Sheet, and CSS. Customers are now able to enter and utilize the facility quicker. Information obtained from both the Staff Assisted Sign-In Sheet, and the CSS, provide a more accurate assessment of the services received by customers.

Worknet customers are also able to make additional comments, suggestions, recommendations or complaints on the form “We Care What You Think,” located throughout the primary site and affiliate sites. Recommendations or suggestions that result in a specific action taken by Worknet to improve services are posted in the foyer of the Worknet ERC to provide direct customer feedback.

When a business is contacted by Worknet Business Services, they are provided a “Did We Meet Your Expectations?” survey. On the survey they can rate the services used, reply to how they heard about the services, provide recommendations to improve services, and request additional services.

3.b. Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is satisfactory relative to benchmark organizations, and demonstrates improvement over time; internal organizational goals are established and achieved.

For approximately five years the Worknet Day Pass had been the primary tool used to measure and assess customer satisfaction. Data collected and compiled from the Day Pass was used to identify and improve services and training programs. As a result of customer input, the same information is being collected through a more efficient process. It is a two-pronged approach which includes the Staff Assisted Sign-In to track services used, and the CSS that rates customer satisfaction.

The new data collection process was implemented in December 2004. The changes were made to receive a more factual evaluation of the Worknet experience. A new Staff Assisted Sign-In Sheet replaced the Day Pass, and a new method, along with the new CSS was developed. Staff completes the initial sign-in sheet with customer assistance, and the CSS information is completed and submitted by the customer at anytime prior to the completion of their Worknet visit.

While the new Sign-in system does include more staff interaction, it is limited to signing the customer in and recording their activities for the day. The customer is given the CSS which they can complete anytime, and from any location in the facility. Upon exiting the building they are

encouraged to deposit the survey in a locked receptacle. CSSs are located at the front desk and each WLT partner cubicle.

Customers are asked to rate each area using a rating scale of 1 (Very Dissatisfied) to 10 (Very Satisfied), and a “yes” or “no” response for referral of services to others. Customers are asked to rate the following indicators: 1) courtesy of staff, 2) time it took to see a counselor, 3) receipt of information needed, and 4) satisfaction with services. Also included is an area for comments regarding customer ratings and/or suggestions about how Worknet services can be improved to better meet their needs. The collected information is entered into a web-based database, which is designed to tabulate the customer service data, satisfaction ratings, and record customer comments on a daily basis. With the new process implemented December 2004, the ratings are more accurate, substantial and reliable, with ratings consistently between 9-10 as they relate to customer satisfaction.

The primary and affiliate sites have the new CSS process in place for data collection. A formal process to report results of the new data collection system has been deployed. Worknet developed a CSS for employers titled “Did We Meet Your Expectations”. This was deployed in March 2004 to rate business satisfaction with services. Employers and business owners are encouraged to return the survey to the Business Services Program Manager for appropriate follow up. Both the Marketing and Business Services Program Managers track the information through a web-based tracking system and review trends relative to their specific areas.

Worknet receives data on the WIA performance measures that can be compared to other Workforce Investment areas in California. EDD provides the performance data on a yearly basis. Locally, a comparison sheet is used to benchmark performance to neighboring counties with similar demographics. Overall, Worknet compares favorably.

3.c. Results linked to Strategic Plan and Continuous Improvement

Customer satisfaction surveys result in actions taken through strategic planning.

The Worknet Day Pass data system had served as a tool to provide WLT members and the WIB with information and data needed to track services and implement improvement strategies to ensure CQI. The Day Pass is no longer used and in its place is the CSS and Services Sign-in Sheet process. The WLT recognizes the CSS as a valuable tool and relies upon the comments and rating of the customers to determine current quality of services, and to identify opportunities for improvement in services for jobseekers and businesses. The WLT developed strategic goals with this feedback mechanism in mind, which is evident in Goal 1, Objective 1; Goal 2, Objective 4; and Goal 3, Objective 1 (pages 29-31).

In addition to using the CSS, the Worknet system continuously seeks opportunities to enhance services which align with the current State and National Workforce emphasis on universal access to employment services for all members of the community, with a focus on individuals with disabilities. An example is a demonstration grant that the Dept of WI received and is implementing in conjunction with other community organizations and some WLT partners. This grant provides funding to educate Worknet staff on how to serve deaf and hard-of-hearing

individuals to include sensitivity training and training on how to use the AT&T Telecommunications Device (TTY) phone and system. Additionally, funds have been used to upgrade current equipment and to purchase new computer software and other assistive technology devices. The Worknet ERC has computer stations with wheelchair accessibility and computer screens/software designed specifically to assist customers who are blind or have limited vision.

The WLT evaluates the CSS system on an annual basis and implements improvements to keep the system current with customer needs and program requirements. Monthly and quarterly aggregation, review, and analysis of the data will continue for organizational learning and improvement opportunities.

3.d. Single Point of Contact for Clients and Employers

Evidence that all core services from all partners are available at the Worknet Employment Resource Center.

Partner relationships that satisfy all customers and increase positive referrals are built and maintained throughout the Worknet system. A MOU was signed by all partners in the system agreeing to provide Core A or Universal services at the Worknet ERC.

In support of the “no wrong door, single point of contact” concept of the WIA, the WLT developed a service Matrix that identifies partner services, and specifically those provided at the Worknet ERC. The WLT updated the Matrix and has added training services. The Matrix is part of the WLT Strategic Goals/Plan.

An information sharing tool is available at the primary and affiliate sites. This binder provides information about services provided by each of the partners with specific contact information for businesses and jobseekers.

A website, Business Services brochures, and a Business Services packet were developed to assist in marketing Business Services and to promote a “single point of contact” for business. Business Services Representatives and Job Coaches work to ensure all employers and business owners are directed to the Dept of WI’s Wardrobe location for Business Services.

4. Information and Analysis

4.a. Information system supports continuous improvement

Existing systems adequately collect data

Information, such as services being accessed, partner referrals, and customer comments, is obtained and gathered at the Worknet ERC through staff assisted services, and from data input to the Case Management System. Staff members who work directly with customers capture and document information as appropriate for the level of service. The information is submitted to the

responsible analyst who aggregates and analyzes the data using a customized database. Information is disseminated on a monthly basis to partner staff, the WLT and the WIB.

The data is used in multiple areas of the operation to make improvements. Following are examples of improvements that have been implemented.

- Increase the number of workshops specific to the needs of jobseekers—Resume, Winning Interviewing Techniques, Applications, Effective Job Search Tools, Career Exploration Spanish Orientation in developmental stages;
- Computer equipment and software updates at primary and affiliate sites;
- Office equipment (fax, copier) relocated for better customer access; and
- Cross training of staff to increase customer access to personalized job coach to provide assistance with resumes, applications, interviewing and job leads.

Areas of concern are brought to the attention of the Worknet Program Manager and Supervisor, and items that can be responded to immediately are addressed. Other items may require additional time due to the nature of the customer comment; i.e., a complaint on services, staff, or a partner—any one of these would require a different response.

Core “A” Services: Are “Self-Directed. As a result, minimal information is gathered regarding customers at this level. The Customer Service Sign-In Process and the CSS collect information on Core Services used and customer satisfaction.

Core “B” Services: Are “Staff Assisted” with a customer being enrolled and most often receiving the assistance of a Job Coach who aids with resumes, applications, interviews, and job leads. Additional paperwork is required for eligibility and case management.

Intensive and Training Services: All services and interactions/communications with customers receiving intensive and training services are documented in customer case files. Forms have been developed and standardized to track information collected at this level, including the IEP. Documentation remains in the case files for staff to review as needed and to make decisions regarding customer services, including providing career guidance and counseling.

As required in the WIA, ETPL performance results are available in the Worknet ERC for customers and stakeholders to review. Annually, The Year-End Report on organizational performance is disseminated to the community in order to enhance relationship and accountability with the WIB and other key stakeholders, including potential customers as well as elected officials.

4.b. Continuous improvement linked to data collection

The collected data is linked to CQI efforts.

Measures and indicators for tracking and improving daily operations and overall organizational performance have been selected through the development of the Customer Service Sign-In Process, CSS, and Case Management System. This data has been incorporated in the Worknet

Balanced Scorecard Strategic Goals/Plan. The purpose of the plan is to provide leaders with a blueprint for action and evaluation. Staff and the IT Committee are looking at ways to upgrade/replace the current Case Management System to make it more effective and provide better information.

As information and data systems continue to be developed and deployed, all data and information availability mechanisms will be evaluated on an ongoing basis as part of the WLT's performance review and strategic planning and improvement process.

4.c. Resource Center offers: information in multiple mediums; self-service; Internet access, trained staff, etc.

The above exists and is readily available to clients.

Worknet is a major source of information to the community regarding Local LMI, UI, unemployment rates, wage data, downsizing, and other economic development information. This information is available to organizations, businesses, customers, and individuals at the Worknet ERC upon request; or through the Internet and EDD. Information access regarding supplier performance, specifically occupational skills trainers on the ETPL, is available at the Worknet ERC for staff, management, customers, suppliers and other stakeholders.

Job-seeking customers are able to gain access to information and obtain services via telephone, Internet, e-mail and by visiting the Worknet ERC where they can receive staff assistance. Our affiliate Worknet ERC sites were established to provide convenient access to services for those customers living in the outlying areas of the county. Using the Internet allows customers to access information about Worknet services from any computer at anytime, which contributes to customer convenience.

Businesses can seek services in the same manner as jobseekers, and can also receive information directly at their place of business from our Worknet Business Services representatives. Recognizing that time is critical for businesses, the Worknet system supports visiting businesses on site to provide expedient services. A newly created partner brochure is located in the Merced County Administration Building to connect businesses to Worknet partners and services. The location was selected as a target spot for businesses as they conduct county license, permits and tax transactions. Customer access is designed to provide convenient and current technological methods to access information and services. Through the Worknet website, jobseekers and businesses can access information and resources 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In addition, a jobseeker can apply for employment or a business can place a job order.

If a customer requires services that are not provided at the Worknet ERC, but are part of the Worknet system, there are two processes in place to provide customer assistance: 1) the Interagency Referral Form, and/or 2) a telephone call to the referring agency to obtain any additional information for the customer. The referral form would be completed with the address, contact name, phone number and any other information the customer may need. There are resources at the front counter of the Worknet ERC to assist all partners when making a referral to a partner in the Worknet system.

A Merced County Resource Guide is available to partners, staff and customers on-line, or a hard copy is available to provide additional assistance in making a referral.

4.d. Strategy for meeting state and local MIS needs (management reporting)

Audit results indicate compliance.

The WIB designated the Dept of WI as the One-Stop Operator. Therefore, it is responsible for administering WIA funds and other related funding sources for the Worknet ERC. The Dept of WI Fiscal/MIS Division is responsible for planning, developing, and implementing a sound Fiscal and Management Information System, and ensures required reports by regulators—such as the State reports regarding performance standards and budget status—are submitted on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis as required. Fiscal/MIS provides monthly performance and fiscal data reports to Dept of WI managers. Monthly fiscal reports are provided to the WIB Finance Committee for review, and staff attends their monthly meeting to answer questions and provide any requested information. Fiscal and participant information is also provided to the WIB at their bimonthly meetings, to the WIB Quality Assurance Committee, and to the WLT at their monthly meetings.

As the One-Stop Operator, the Dept of WI is highly regulated by local, state, and federal agencies to ensure accountability for funds used. The Dept of WI is monitored yearly for compliance in fiscal and procurement performance and there were no findings for the 2004-2005 review. Fiscal and procurement performance monitoring is conducted by the State of California EDD, and performance findings indicate that the Department, including the Worknet ERC, is meeting performance standards and expenditure requirements. The Dept of WI monitors the MOUs between the Worknet partners and the WIB on a yearly basis to ensure compliance.

5. Human Resource Focus

5.a. Staff is competent

Job descriptions exist for all positions. Employees are evaluated against the requirements of the job descriptions. Employee evaluations demonstrate that employees are competent and meeting job requirements.

All partner agencies have certified that staff assigned to the Worknet ERC is competent and meet job requirements as listed on existing agency job descriptions. Each partner has its own contractually driven employee evaluation and completes them on a regular basis as prescribed by each partner. Deficiencies or opportunities for professional growth are addressed through training, coaching and/or mentoring. Strengths and accomplishments are noted. The WLT has identified a set of competencies it would like for staff to accomplish through a national certification.

If there is a deficiency identified in the CSS, the Worknet supervisor discusses it with staff and provides feedback, information, or training as appropriate (ref. 4.a., page 38).

5b. Continuous learning

Employees have an individual development plan that has been implemented. There is an organization-wide employee development plan that has been implemented. There is a vehicle for making employees aware of available training.

Continuous learning is defined by the WLT as updating and implementing policies and procedures, participation on the WLT and Partners meetings, as well as the other training that is listed. For example, teleconferences through National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) and training on WIA Performance Measures and Exit Strategies. Due to the multiple agencies involved in Worknet, and variance in partner requirements and union issues, an IEP for all employees is not a reasonable or legal expectation.

The WLT has identified an on-line training program that it would like staff to accomplish in the Strategic Plan (ref. Goal 1, Obj. 3, page 30), which is the first stage of the Employee Development Plan (EDP). Participation is optional. Staff is encouraged but cannot be mandated to participate because of union constraints by various partner agencies.

This program has three tiers. Tier I includes 13 courses on which the competencies for National Workforce Professional I certification are based, which is recognized by the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals. A competency level of 90% or above must be achieved on each course. The Tier I Competencies include:

- Career Development
- Customer Service
- Diversity
- General Helping Skills
- History and Structure of the Workforce Development System
- In-depth Look at the Workforce Investment Act
- Interpersonal Relations
- Job Keeping Skills
- Job Preparation Skills
- Job Search Skills
- Labor Market Information
- Program Management
- Technology

The course work concludes with a National Workforce Professional Tier 1-Certification exam. Staff who achieve a minimum score of 90% on the Certification exam will be recognized by the WLT, their parent organization, and the WIB.

The One-Stop Operator has made a commitment to support staff in seeking certification. The cost per each staff member enrolled in the course is an investment of \$247.50. Time is provided during work hours for completion of the coursework. To date, 28 individuals have been enrolled in the course. Staff has six months from enrollment to complete the certification program. Each staff member works at their own pace depending upon his/her learning style and approach to the

course work. Nine individuals have received Certification, and by June 2005, at least 15 are expected to complete the course and pass the Certification exam.

The early attempts to establish a local certification program were evaluated by the WLT. The benefits of on-line curriculum were weighed against the logistics, cost and concern expressed in developing a local certification program. The consistency in content and delivery, the flexibility in taking the on-line course, as well as the reasonable cost were factors in the WLT's decision to adopt the National Certification.

Three teleconferences have been made available to all partners this year through the Dept of WI and the Merced County WIB with several partners participating. They were sponsored by the NAWB and the Workforce Development Network. Greg Newton was the featured speaker and covered the following topics: 1) Aligning for Action and Achievement, 2) Ten Human Resource Challenges and What Your Workforce Board Can Do to make a Difference, and 3) Partnering with Economic Development: Creating the Workforce Advantage.

Several methods are utilized to notify staff of training events. Scheduled training is posted on the Worknet ERC's Intranet site. Training is announced at WLT meetings, partner meetings, in the Chamber of Commerce newsletter, and in flyers and brochures from Merced College and Merced Adult School. Save-the-date flyers are e-mailed to staff and partners. A contact person for information and registration is noted both on the Intranet and on flyers.

Locally, partners have been cooperating for years to share training opportunities. Slots are often made available in partner-sponsored training. Administrators are contacted and invited to fill those slots. This message is forwarded to supervisor and line staff with a response deadline. Many times videos are made of telecasts or training sessions. These videos are part of a lending library available to partners.

Spanish bilingual services will be enhanced through a certification available for bilingual staff. This certification exceeds current Merced County requirements, to include both written and oral proficiency. A Spanish Bilingual Proficiency Test through the CPS Human Resource Services is available to bilingual staff to receive a certification with written and oral components.

Partners are provided information regarding Worknet Orientations, workshops, PLATO Lab, PESCO Lab, and the Computer Lab, enabling them to respond to customer inquiries about resources and services.

With individual multiple agencies being involved in Worknet which all have their own union for their employees, a system wide IDP is not feasible.

5.c. Team orientation

There are regular meetings to disseminate information and discuss important business issues. There are multidisciplinary cross-functional teams to work on performance improvement initiatives.

The WLT has met regularly for six years on a monthly basis with teams and workgroups meeting more frequently. Partner meetings for staff located at the Worknet ERC are held on a monthly basis. The Worknet ERC staff meetings are held on a biweekly schedule.

As a result of the Certification Feedback Report, the WLT has established several workgroups comprised of leadership team member partners and line staff who address performance improvement in a variety of areas:

Leadership and Strategic Planning: Ensuring that the action plan for the goals and objectives has measurable outcomes and is being accomplished as planned. Revisiting the mission, vision and goals to ensure consistency with current workforce needs.

Customer and Market Focus: Examines methods of collecting accurate data from customers, which allows for improved products and services, thereby increasing the ability to retain customers and expand the customer base.

Information & Analysis: Works toward the continuous improvement of data collection methods used to analyze performance and management of information.

Human Resource Focus: Examines the organization's efforts to build a working environment and employee support climate conducive to performance excellence and personal and organizational growth. Provides opportunities to motivate and enable employees to develop and utilize their skills while supporting the organization's goals, objectives and action plans.

Process Management: Continues to monitor the aspects of the organization's processes (procedures, customer-flow) and service delivery to ensure they remain customer-focused.

Business Results: Looks at achievements in customer satisfaction, services, financial and marketplace performance, human resource results and operational performance. Real data rather than anecdotal responses to these areas are collected.

Teams report on progress and accomplishments at the WLT meetings and frequently at the WIB Quality Assurance Committee meetings. The minutes for the meetings are posted on the WLT website.

5.d. Uniform application of human resources policies

Results of employee satisfaction surveys demonstrate uniform application of policies. A formal grievance process exists. Grievances are not excessive given the size of the organization.

The WLT has developed an employee satisfaction survey for Worknet partners and staff, which is scheduled to be administered once a year.

At the Worknet ERC a copy of the grievance policies and procedures is posted in numerous high traffic areas throughout the Worknet ERC. There is a designated contact person within the One-Stop Operator's agency (Dept of WI). Formal grievance processes exist for each of the partner agencies. Copies of each partner agency's grievance policy may be obtained by contacting the Human Resource representative for each agency.

Given the volume of customers and services provided at Worknet ERC, there is no indication of excessive grievances as reported by partner agencies.

5.e. Employee expectations well-defined

Policies and procedures are disseminated throughout the organization. All new employees get an orientation to the organization.

Policies and Procedures for Worknet ERC partners and staff have been developed and are reviewed with each staff member as a part of the staff orientation process.

All new staff receives a Worknet Orientation, which describes the Worknet system. Each new staff member completes a New Employee Orientation Checklist that they sign validate their participation.

A copy of the Customer Use Policy for the Worknet ERC is included in the orientation.

A check-off list and sign-off sheet are used to validate the information has been reviewed by partner staff.

6. Process Management

6.a. Uniform application of policies and procedures

Policies and procedures are disseminated throughout the organization. All new employees get an orientation to the organization.

The Worknet ERC has policies and procedures in place that specifically address the daily operations of the Worknet. The policies and procedures include, but are not limited to, how customers access Core A services and how customers are referred to various agencies throughout the city and county for other appropriate services.

All new One-Stop employees who represent the various Worknet partners at the One-Stop, receive an orientation of the One-Stop policies and procedures. Policy and procedure revisions and updates are provided to staff, as needed, at staff meetings, as well as by e-mail, memorandums and the Intranet. One-Stop staff also receive reorientation once a year during the monthly partner meeting to ensure each employee is up to date on current policies and procedures.

The Worknet New Employee Orientation is conducted by a Dept of WI supervisor and consists of an employee tour of the facility, as well as an orientation of Worknet policies and procedures. In addition, new employees are also scheduled for a WIA Orientation at Worknet to receive an overview of the Worknet system. The supervisor works with new employees to ensure that the Worknet ERC Policies and Procedures Checklist is completed within the first month of assignment to the Worknet. Worknet ERC Policies and Procedures Checklist is placed in the employee's master folder with a copy given to the employee.

6.b. Feedback mechanism

An adequate feedback mechanism exists.

Worknet ERC One-Stop partner staff, at every level, is encouraged to bring forth issues to the WLT regarding the One-Stop operation. In determining priority and whether a workgroup should be formed to address an issue, the WLT will use the following criteria:

- Impact to customer products, services and satisfaction;
- Impact to front-line staff including training, instruments and other preparation needed for implementation;
- Costs associated with improvements;
- Impact to organizational performance; and
- Alignment with Vision, Mission and Core Values.

As new workgroups are formed, and the groups determine actions that need to be taken in regard to particular issues, the workgroups' recommendations are presented to, and consensus reached by, the WLT and reported to the Quality Assurance Committee. Any change or addition to existing policies and procedures will be reviewed by the workgroup initiating the change after a three-month period to assess effectiveness. As a part of this evaluation, the Worknet staff affected by the change will provide feedback to help in the assessment. If it is evident the change is not working, the workgroup will revisit the issue to ensure continuous improvement.

The October 2003 WIB Feedback Report provided an excellent opportunity for CQI. As a result of the report, six CQI workgroups (ref. Cat. 5.c. page 44) were formed to address the opportunities for improvement that were recommended in the report. The workgroups included management and line staff from the Worknet partner agencies that comprise the WLT. The actions taken by each workgroup were shared with, and consensus reached by the WLT, and reported to the Quality Assurance Committee.

6.c. Service Recovery

There is a formal policy/mechanism for complaint management. Examination of a sample of complaints indicates that the policy is being implemented.

Worknet ERC has a formal written customer grievance/complaint policy that is disseminated to all enrolled WIA customers. It is also available in the Computer Lab and on the Worknet website. The policy is reviewed by all new staff assigned to the Worknet ERC during New Employee Orientation, and is revisited at least annually by all staff through awareness training conducted by the Department. The policy and complaint forms are also posted on the Dept of WI Intranet for staff access.

There is a policy and procedure for discrimination grievances and complaints, and a separate policy and procedure for program grievances and complaints.

The majority of complaints are resolved through informal methods and do not reach the level of formal complaints. If a formal complaint is filed the Equal Opportunity Officer (EOO) provides a report to Executive Leadership.

An annual report summarizing the number of formal complaints filed is provided to Executive Leadership. Policy and procedural changes are implemented as needed.

Complaint information gathered through formal and informal methods is communicated to supervisors and program managers as well as staff. Information such as the number and types of complaints, as well as strategies for resolution, is discussed for purposes of eliminating causes of complaints, organizational learning, and process/product improvement. In-service or formal training is coordinated as needed in order to ensure that staff and leaders continuously improve their skills to immediately and effectively resolve complaints.

Grievances or complaints concerning Worknet partner agencies are directed to the respective partner staff for processing in accordance with that partner's grievance procedures. The appropriate Worknet partner EOO will assist the customer throughout the formal complaint management process to ensure a satisfactory resolution.

Job seeking and Business Services customers may register complaints via e-mail, telephone, or in person at the Worknet ERC. Business Services customers may also register complaints directly with our Business Services representative, Job Coaches, or with the EOO. All customers are provided with information regarding the various access points for complaints during the first contact with Worknet.

6.d. Staff-empowerment

Decisions can be made at various levels with the organization. There is an organizational assessment to determine if the degree of empowerment is appropriate/working?

The principles outlined in the Baldrige Criteria are used to guide Worknet ERC leaders in creating an environment that promotes empowerment and innovation at various levels within the Worknet system. The WLT received a reorientation to the Baldrige Criteria, and training will continue to be provided, as needed, as the team evolves.

To ensure that daily decision making is decentralized, front-line/process owners are, and will continue to be, included in CQI workgroups, such as those created to address the recommendations made in the October 2003 WIB Feedback Report. The cross functionality configuration of the aforementioned workgroups allows Worknet partner staff to work together and fosters an environment for creativity and innovation by sharing program and service expertise.

A Balanced Scorecard Strategic Goals/Plan has been developed. One of the areas that it addresses is the empowerment of staff.

7. Business Results

7.a. Customer and Community Awareness

There is an awareness of One-Stop based on random survey of community.

There is a growing awareness of the Worknet system as evidenced by several surveys that have been completed within the past five years. Those surveys are as follows:

The Action Business Center (ABC) through the Small Business Development Center division conducted a Retention Expansion Survey. The survey had 35 questions. One hundred six businesses were surveyed with two specific questions that had the Dept of WI (previously PITD) as an answer option. The responses were generally low as it relates to using the services, approximately 3.7%; however, this survey was conducted and completed in 2000 when the Worknet ERC was in its infancy stage and the One-Stop had not yet been branded.

A second phase of this survey was completed in 2002. One hundred sixteen local businesses participated. The questions remain the same but the answer options have been changed to reflect Worknet. It was determined that awareness and inquiries for information relating to services provided by Worknet have significantly increased with 42 of the 116 businesses (36%) surveyed either aware of or inquiring about the services and/or programs.

The ERISS Corporation survey completed in 2002 had four specific supplemental questions relating to the Worknet services. Of the 527 responses at least 30% would use our services at least quarterly, and overwhelmingly used training for existing employees and customized training program services through Worknet.

An electronic marketing survey of the Dept of WI employees was conducted in October 2002 to determine awareness of marketing efforts on behalf of Worknet. There were 12 questions, all relating to Worknet marketing, with 70 responses. Approximately 90% of the Dept of WI staff was aware of marketing being done for Worknet and the types of marketing. Presentations of the results of the survey were done for each unit within the Dept of WI to continue the effort to heighten awareness among staff. While a more recent and formal survey has not been conducted, the consensus is that staff is far more aware of marketing through the use of the electronic marketing order form and feedback from the marketing website.

An electronic marketing survey was conducted in February 2003 of the WIB and the WLT to determine marketing awareness. There were ten questions, all relating to Worknet marketing, with 35 responses. Awareness was much higher from the WLT than from the WIB. The results were presented to both groups.

The Center for Workforce Preparation Development Employer survey developed by the United States Chambers of Commerce was conducted in January 2003. There were 14 questions with nine specific questions about the One-Stop. The results reflected a need to continue to raise awareness about Worknet among the business community. This was accomplished through two Workforce Academies in June 2003 in Merced and Los Banos, and the subsequent roundtables that were held afterwards.

The Worknet Day Pass has been revised and is now solely a CSS with specific questions about marketing and awareness by the customers accessing the system. These are completed on a daily basis and by all customers rather than by the previous method of randomly for one week during the month. The survey solicits information to determine how customers learned of Worknet services. The results are used to determine the most effective marketing methods, and identify potential gaps in marketing efforts. The questions on the survey were expanded to include three open-ended questions and specific marketing strategies inquiring how the customer heard of Worknet.

The Dept of WI Business Services Unit includes a CSS in their marketing packet for businesses. This survey includes questions on how businesses hear of Worknet. A database is being formatted in order to track the responses that are received and make appropriate decisions related to marketing. There is a radio campaign being conducted with a local radio station whose demographic audience is the business owner, and the marketing is customized specific to the businesses in the community.

The Quality Assurance Committee has requested that a Business Services Survey of 30 businesses be conducted to determine the awareness level of the businesses as well as customer satisfaction related to Worknet services.

There is an organizational effort to raise awareness.

There is an ongoing and continuing effort to raise awareness about the Worknet system and the ERC. This is being accomplished in a myriad of ways including:

The WLT is in a continuing mode to raise awareness about Worknet. In 2004, a partner brochure was developed to identify partnering agencies and their services. This brochure and others are placed in display racks in the Merced County Administration Building lobby and at Merced City Hall in an effort to promote awareness of Worknet services to businesses as they apply for licensing, make tax payments, etc., and to promote awareness of Worknet services for jobseekers. Literature is also made available and provided to the Greater Chamber of Commerce office.

A “Did You Know” campaign was launched in 2004. Fliers were inserted into the Chambers of Commerce Newsletters followed by “Did You Know” postcards that were mailed to 1,530 county employers. Dept of WI has reviewed returned postcards due to incorrect addresses, and has updated the database for future mailings.

Worknet ERC staff and partners participated in the Chamber of Commerce Workforce Academies and Roundtables. Attendance and participation in community job fairs, community events and presentations to service organizations are also part of this effort. The Worknet ERC facilitates the Earned Income Tax Credit Program with community volunteers and staff. Members of the WLT have conducted radio interviews to promote Worknet. An Open House for the community was held at the Worknet ERC in September 2002 and again in August 2004, with the last one being customized around Business Services.

Partners such as Merced Adult School and the EDD have weekly orientations wherein Worknet brochures and information are distributed. Merced Adult School provided a full page advertisement to Worknet services in their Fall 2004 class schedule. Advertising was placed in Central Valley Opportunity Center’s Graduation Book.

MCOE conducts field trips for youth to the Worknet ERC. Career Centers at all Merced County High Schools have information on Worknet services. Dept of WI sponsors Worknet partner tables at the KUBB/HOT105 Job Fair twice per year. Worknet collaborates in marketing Merced College’s Thrive and Survive in the Workplace classes, and also placed an ad in Merced College Extended Opportunities Programs and Services (EOPS) publication for Black History Month. A representative from the Los Banos Enterprise has attended and reported on local Youth Program graduates at the One-Stop.

Dept of WI’s Business Services marketing packets have been prepared. Literature and brochures relating to tax credits and other benefits to employers have been hand delivered, and Worknet information has also been provided. This literature will also be made available to partner agencies as finances allow.

Public Service Announcements are prepared on an ongoing basis. Weekly advertisements are placed in local newspapers. Through MCOE, advertisements are shown on METV, and the participants in the Media/Graphics ROP created a commercial to promote the Worknet in Merced. Staff has also conducted live radio interviews with local radio stations presenting information and services available at Worknet.

Worknet articles are published in the Greater Merced Chamber of Commerce Business Journal. An article on Dept of WI's partnership with the Merced College Nursing Program was profiled in a national trade publication.

Dept of WI has promoted services for the hearing and visually impaired through a Demonstration Grant. Rapid Response, a service of Worknet, is also used as a means to raise awareness of the system. Joint WIB/BOS meetings are conducted, and an End-of-Year Report is made available that provides information about Worknet. The State of the Workforce report is provided to the Merced County BOS and city councils.

Worknet ERC name badges for staff and partners are in place. Worknet ERC signage is in place in Merced and Los Banos. A sign cannot be placed at the Livingston site due to contractual issues with the Human Services Agency. Worknet partner signage has been provided to all partners for placement in windows at their home agencies.

Resources are devoted to marketing/PR.

A variety of mediums are in place to market Worknet of Merced County ERCs and they are consistent and frequent, in that one or more of the mediums are used on a weekly basis. They are as follows:

Radio, newspapers, television, Internet, direct mailings, mailings through inserts, printed materials such as brochures, marketing and website, PowerPoint presentations, community presentations and involvement, annual year-end reports and promotional items.

A monthly drawing at One-Stop Career Centers has been implemented in an effort to increase CSS completion (marketing questions have been expanded on the survey in 2004 offering valuable feedback on how the customer heard about Worknet services).

A Dept of WI team is dedicated to marketing efforts. This team meets on an ongoing basis as a part of their regular duties with Dept of WI. In addition, community activities are supported and resources are devoted to website improvements for the WLT and WIB; and in the future, the Worknet site will also be updated.

Dept of WI-sponsored panels discussing regional strategic issues that the WIB has identified. A Manufacturing Summit was sponsored in Spring 2004. A Building Contractors Forum and an Automotive Forum were also conducted.

Marketing/PR addresses both supply and demand.

Customized marketing is done for all potential customers identified as jobseekers or employers. Partnering agencies are identified that offer specific programs and services at Worknet ERC for each category of customer.

Jobseekers: Services for jobseekers and youth are highlighted in a multitude of marketing mediums as previously mentioned in this section, conducted on behalf of Worknet.

Businesses: The Business Services Unit, through the Dept of WI, has customized services for employers. A marketing plan specific to this unit will be developed and implemented. Printed literature specifically addresses employer needs, and a new database is being created specific to Business Services to better track services, contacts and follow-up with businesses in Merced County.

The WLT recognizes that marketing efforts, such as the Partner Brochure, assist in the identification of programs and services for our external customers—the jobseekers and business owners—and our internal customers the Worknet ERC.

Marketing plan exists and results are evaluated against the plan.

A Marketing Plan was developed through the Marketing Committee of the WIB in collaboration with Dept of WI staff, who is tasked with implementing and complying with the plan. Currently, due to recent revisions of the committees, staff report on a regular basis to the Program Planning and Development Committee.

The Program Planning and Development Committee and WIB have approved language to incorporate methods of evaluation into the Marketing Plan.

7.b. Demonstrated and Measurable

Financial Performance: A budget exists and performance suggests that the organization is operating within budget and significant variances have been adequately explained.

A budget for the Worknet ERC exists and performance does, in fact, suggest that it is operating within that budget. There are no significant variances that need to be explained. The Dept of WI undergoes state audits and monitoring, and is also required to produce a Fiscal Procurement Report to validate appropriate operations and variances.

Costs are benchmarked (and compare favorably) against other workforce investment areas.

Costs are not currently being benchmarked; however, there has been ongoing dialogue with Kern and Stanislaus Counties to implement a benchmark system in order to compare services, performance and cost.

Operational performance. Objectives in the strategic plan are achieved.

The WIB has a five-year strategic plan that includes Worknet. The WLT recently revised its original Strategic Goals into four goals that are more aligned and realistic to its mission, and has also established dates and actions for achievement of each goal. It has also recently reframed its Mission and Vision for Worknet.

Customer satisfaction.

As indicated previously, the Worknet Day Pass is now the CSS, and is used solely as a survey to solicit customer satisfaction for each visit to Worknet. This information is collected and then entered into a web-based data system wherein reports are made available for review of the level of customer satisfaction being experienced. The WLT is currently reviewing this data monthly. The Worknet ERC is consistently receiving ratings of nine or higher, very satisfied, in all areas.