Partnering with Local Workforce Systems to Meet Community Workforce Needs: Public Library Association Webinar

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Defining the Workforce System

- **Public workforce system** – US Department of Labor defines a network of federal, state, and local government-funded agencies and programs that provide services to workers, job seekers, and employers “to support economic expansion and develop the talent of our nation’s workforce.”

- **Local workforce system** – Set of organizations and activities that prepares people for employment, helps workers advance in their careers, and seeks to build a skilled workforce to support employers and the local economy.
Sources of Information

- Local Workforce System Guide
  - [https://workforce.urban.org/](https://workforce.urban.org/)

- Understanding Local Workforce Systems
  - [https://www.urban.org/research/publication/understanding-local-workforce-systems](https://www.urban.org/research/publication/understanding-local-workforce-systems)

- Building America’s Workforce Initiative
  - [https://www.urban.org/policy-centers/cross-center-initiatives/building-americas-workforce](https://www.urban.org/policy-centers/cross-center-initiatives/building-americas-workforce)
What organizations are part of local workforce systems?

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<tr>
<th><strong>Government</strong></th>
<th><strong>Workforce Collaboratives</strong></th>
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<td>Federal agencies (DOL, Ed., HHS)</td>
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<td>State government</td>
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<td>Local government</td>
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<td>Industry collaboratives</td>
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<td>Regional coalitions</td>
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<td>Funder groups</td>
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<th><strong>Service providers</strong></th>
<th><strong>Advocates</strong></th>
<th><strong>Employers</strong></th>
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<td>American Job Centers</td>
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<td>Community and technical colleges</td>
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<td>Four-year colleges and universities</td>
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<td>K-12 public school districts</td>
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<td>Community and faith-based organizations</td>
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<td>Public libraries</td>
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<td>For-profit employment and training entities</td>
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<td>Labor and trade unions</td>
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<td>Worker advocacy organizations</td>
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<td>Individual employers</td>
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<td>Business and industry associations</td>
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*Image and text from the Urban Institute.*
Who do local workforce systems serve?

- Unemployed or underemployed workers
- Workers seeking career change or advancement
- People who face personal or structural barriers to work
  - Parents with young children
  - People with criminal records
  - Individuals who are low-income
  - Black, Latinx, indigenous and other people of color
- Youth (16-24)
- Adults with low basic skills (academic, English language)
What are the functions of local workforce systems?

- Providing employment services
  - Explore career interests, find jobs, advance

- Providing education and training
  - Technical and occupational skills, basic academic skills, career readiness skills

- Providing supportive services
  - Personal and academic

- Supporting employers’ human resources needs
  - Job requirements, recruitment, screening, onboarding, upskilling

- Improving job quality and access
  - Working with employers, advocacy

- Addressing issues of equity
  - Racial, ethnic, economic
What are roles for libraries in local workforce systems?

- Serving/reaching special populations
  - Libraries can be safe and welcoming spaces for certain groups (e.g., youth, older adults, immigrants, low-income populations)

- Providing employment services
  - Supporting career exploration and job search
  - Location of an American Job Center

- Providing education and training
  - Digital skills training
  - English Language instruction

- Providing location for services and convenings
  - Where people can learn about and connect with support services
  - Where employers can interview candidates
  - Where advocates or workforce collaboratives can meet
Considerations and Opportunities

- Libraries can be important partners in local workforce systems
- Public workforce system (WIOA) offers limited dollars but there are opportunities for strategic partnerships
- Reauthorization of WIOA may present new opportunities
- New federal relief funding (American Rescue Plan, infrastructure bill) offers potential for resources
- State and local governments are important source of funding
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