

IL Workforce Commission on Equity and Access

MEETING #6 MINUTES

April 21, 2022; 10:30-12:30 CT

Vision Statement

Illinois workers and employers deserve the best workforce system. The system is the first stop for people looking for a way to engage in fulfilling work, and every system entry point puts people on that pathway. The system meets every jobseeker's employment and education training needs by actively listening -- transforming engagement from transactions to conversations, from being guided by checklists to developing relationships. The system will connect people with resources within and outside the workforce system, and provide excellent, empathetic, and comprehensive information and guidance that will help people achieve their goals. The system is interoperable, addresses the whole person. It is aware of and responsive to histories of trauma and peoples' multi-faceted social identities. It ensures that everyone is served with a spirit of excellence and compassion. The system connects Illinois workers to the opportunities they deserve.

Reactions to the Vision Statement

- Powerful and comprehensive
- Putting into policy language the importance of developing relationships as a priority is a big deal, a very appreciated and welcome addition.
- Might we also emphasize that "we all" (e.g. Illinois) is better when we have an equitable, accessible, and effective system?
- How could we encourage and recognize the providers who become effective at developing relationships without turning that process into another outcome reporting task that adds more work?
- I'd love to see some connection in the vision statement to what happens to Illinois workers once they are connected with the opportunity -- a vision for a system that also measures and evaluates the quality of that opportunity.
- Need to highlight that the system will hold itself accountable for outcomes. And how those metrics can be helpful to incentivize serving those with the most needs
- Can we make the vision less linear by emphasizing the various on-ramps and off-ramps that exist?
- Let's create a phrase or tagline version of this vision that we can repeat with ease

Funding, Infrastructure & Governance Discussion

General Reactions

In general, the direction of these recommendations helps us get closer to addressing a long-standing issue – that a lack of higher-level commitment/oversight (particularly from gov's office) has impacted the system for years now.

"Often when we think about change, we think about org charts and moving chairs around on the ship. When I think about governance and management, I think of it as accountability and oversight. The

question is not: what do we need to change in the structure of gov't, but what do we need to do to hold ourselves accountable? When you start moving big pieces of furniture around, we get lost in the energy and devotion of the resources it takes to do *that* vs. energy that could be spent on making the actual changes."

The Commission has been helpful in bringing together multiple voices. How might we leverage the momentum the Commission has created to build an implementation road map that gets us to the outcomes we want? Would be exciting to figure out what a part 2 of this Commission process looks like.

More specificity needs to be added to the recommendations:

- **Understanding what role this governance structure has in relation to the IWIB**
 - Would this "Cabinet" oversee the IWIB? What would accountability look like?
 - What is the role of the State workforce board? Is the new group side-by-side with IWIB? Is it just WIOA-focused?
 - Should this commission make a recommendation about how the IWIB functions? WIOA only or beyond WIOA? Compliance only or compliance and strategic?
 - Other "oversight boards" have requirements in legislation related to roles and affiliations. Wondering how that would look in this case.

- **How stability in the structure will be ensured across administrations and what role legislation will need to play**

- **Spell out historically marginalized individuals, who the net is intended to catch**
 - How do we ensure people with disabilities don't fall through the cracks? How do we train client-facing staff to work with people with disabilities? We need to ensure that design enhancements do not require folx with disabilities to jump through more hoops. Ensure compliance with disability structures.
 - How do we ensure that people get support for their basic needs: transportation (bus passes, gas cards)?

- **Ensure funding mechanisms (flow, amounts, reporting) are clarified**
 - Would the new entity hold all money and then disburse?
 - How will funding be tied to accountability and leadership structure?
 - How will agencies' obligations to funders be evaluated?

- **Provide more clarity around terminology and impact of recommendations**
 - Provide "coordination" vs. "consolidation" clarity
 - Show how these recommendations at the top will translate to the bottom.
 - Be really clear about how local expertise will be systematically incorporated into our processes and decision-making so that we don't have to re-visit this process entirely.

- Consider local engagement – how it is reflected in design enhancements
- Draw a scope around the vision to show which functionalities need to be streamlined; be clear about what’s included and not included.
- Distinguish differences in these recommendations from the current status quo
 - Be concrete about activities and functions already in place and clear about who will be doing what
- Need greater specificity and clarity on concrete functions/activities/roles before we go about combining functions. Would be valuable to have much more detailed information about the various functions as outlined in our State plans, the law, regulations, etc. To this end, it would also be helpful to consider how to frame around what *is* being done vs. saying “nothing is being done”
- Illustrate how, as a consumer, these changes make it easier to access programs and hiring/training ops.

The Governor’s Office must:

- Recognize the importance of the effort (e.g. so many are currently being left out of the system).
- Agree on the change, specifically the direction of design enhancements.
- Resource the process.
- Identify a specific person who “owns the changes” in the Gov office, someone who “wakes up every day thinking about it” and leads communication with the legislature. Person would report directly to the Governor. Nothing gets done w/o buy in and advocacy from the leadership. There must be clarity around who has final decision-making authority.
- Designate a leader and paid staff that can provide continuity. Take advantage of spots reserved for legislators and the governor’s office in governing body.
- Pay appointed, “volunteer” staff that are a part of the governance structure
- Commit to keeping momentum across administrations, gird against staff turnover. Enact laws to force continuity. Or, try to depoliticize it
- Include *consistent* state funding. This can’t be a roll of the dice from year to year to fund one-off programs.
- Engage workforce experts to help educate the GA and Gov’s Office on these issues. They need to know clear points of contact for various populations and to clearly define the non-governmental organizations that need to be partners.
 - Real opportunity to leverage the spots on the IWIB reserved for legislators to empower those individuals as experts and advocates on workforce and help carry the message.
 - Must ensure group/person has a deep understanding of how the workforce development ecosystem functions
- Adopt and message an economic development framing: “What’s good for the jobseeker is good for businesses”

Specific Suggestions to Help Provide More Clarity:

- Clarify language that there is not a recommendation to build a new agency

- The 5th bullet under “Governing Entity Roles & Responsibilities” could be better revised to read “Advocate for *all* Illinoisans, including those who are most marginalized...”
- Not entirely clear what “integration of functions” means still. The ripest areas for this kind of integration would be intake/assessment, but caution against integrating case management functions too much. We wouldn’t want to lose the specialized expertise needed to serve various populations (e.g. those with a disability, returning citizens, etc).
- Agreed that we don’t want to re-traumatize individuals in the intake process. Many people don’t fit neatly into a “WIOA box” so we need to figure out how to orient beyond WIOA, despite that being the core source of workforce funding.
- Test the personas in implementation infrastructure. Articulate that explicitly in the FIG.
- Connect the recs to design enhancements
- Provide clarity on which functions could consolidate
- Identify sample metrics/outcomes that align with the vision (knowing a re-populated cabinet would further expand upon them)
 - Articulate the 5/10/15 year outcome measures to get to the vision. How will we know that what we are doing is working? We should consider doing an assessment at Year 3, Year 5, Year 7, Year 10.
 - Metrics should not add burden to the staff who have to track them; funding sources require lots of metrics now
 - Metrics should balance the needs to be equitable and accessible
- Connect to exemplars from other states
- Given that there are overlaps between what’s emerging from this Commission and what’s stated as planned and/or in place in our State WIOA plan, we should dive deeper into what the barriers to truly delivering on those plans are.
- Prioritize the recommendations – new governance cannot do this all at once

Other Models to Examine:

- There are other examples where pooled funds from a variety of agencies has worked to address systemic challenges. Example: the navigator positions created to bridge adult ed and workforce services in Chicago via ScaleLit (nee Chicago Citywide Literacy Coalition).
- Workforce Equity Initiative as a model for identifying and successfully addressing barriers. Worked out regionally to connect to state workforce system. What are the common pieces tied to outcomes? Wraparound services provided by community organizations. How does that model fit in with functional alignment?