# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of the Needs Assessment Process</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Needs Survey</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Groups</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs Assessment Survey Results</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overarching Themes</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort Focus Group Results</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State and Regional Executives</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Seeker Services</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Stop Managers</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Service Representatives</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intake and Reception Staff</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educators</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion and Next Steps</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

The purpose of this report is to identify the critical training needs to be addressed by Kentucky’s Workforce Academy (KWA) in support of the Commonwealth’s workforce system transformation initiative. The report summarizes our findings and analysis of those training needs as a result of our survey of professional staff and subsequent focus group activities.

The KWA will be a primary vehicle in support of system transformation. Clearly communicating to leaders, staff and partners how the system will have to adapt in order to achieve transformational goals, and setting expectations for participation in the process, are critical components of a successful change strategy. The purpose of the KWA is to build the expertise and capacity of the system’s employees and partners to support a world-class sector strategy approach, transforming the workforce system from disconnected and siloed programs and agencies to an integrated delivery system benefitting the economy and citizens of the Commonwealth, and each of its economic regions.

The KWA will benefit the Commonwealth’s workforce system and its customers by providing professional development aligned to the strategic transformational goals. Staffs’ active participation in the transformation depends on their fully understanding its goals and aspirations, as well as achieving clarity of individual roles and responsibilities. How the academy will be designed and what will be included in our curriculum recommendations to achieve and sustain transformation is the focus of the needs assessment we conducted and analyze here.

Overview of the Needs Assessment Process

Consistent with the Kentucky brand, high-level customer service is the driver for creating a training academy for managers and service delivery staff. Creating the curriculum for the academy begins with understanding what learners need to know about the transformation, what they already know, and what they will need to learn in support of their work role(s). Concurrently, KWA leaders need to also be concerned with cultural barriers, if any, and how to best overcome those as part of the academy’s deployment.

As a first step in developing a meaningful, impactful curriculum, we set out to better understand these learning needs. We did so using two primary needs gathering activities:

1. An Online Needs Assessment Survey; and,
2. Focus Groups.
Online Needs Survey

The academy needs assessment was sent to nearly 1,000 representatives of the Kentucky workforce system and its partners representing six targeted audiences for the training ("the cohorts"). Results were received from 718 respondents and were analyzed by our team. The results of the survey provided insight into:

1. How informed respondents felt about the Kentucky transformation initiatives;
2. How prepared respondents felt they were for that transformation;
3. The degree of confidence respondents felt about their current skills and knowledge;
4. The deficiencies in knowledge, skills and attitudes (related to their job roles in the transformed system) that participants could identify; and,
5. Opinion leaders to whom respondents look to for guidance and advice.

Detailed results from the survey are included in Appendix A.

Focus Groups

The results from the survey, along with extensive background gathered by Kentucky Workforce System subject matter experts (SMEs) on job competencies in Kentucky, were used to facilitate onsite focus groups with the identified opinion leaders from all levels and disciplines of the Kentucky system. These sessions were held in Lexington on September 27, 2011 with nearly 100 professional staff from around the Commonwealth, with each cohort group being facilitated by a member of our team.

After hearing the vision for Kentucky’s transformation from state leadership and learning the results of the online survey, focus groups representing each of the audience cohorts were asked to identify training needs and cultural obstacles that should be addressed as part of the KWA curriculum in order to help the system achieve transformational goals.

Needs Assessment Survey Results

The needs assessment survey outcomes provided us with critical, overarching themes, as well as good insight into potential, specific training needs. Specific training need insights from the survey were then validated through our focus group activity. For reporting purposes, we highlight the following key themes which will be important to our ongoing planning.
Overarching Themes

The key to successful transformation is the acceptance of the need for change by managers and staff, and an understanding of what transformation looks like, or what will be different during and after the change process has taken place. For that acceptance to happen, a real understanding of what the change means to daily work processes has to occur. The results of the needs assessment revealed a great deal of communication still needs to take place for people to believe in the vision and to thereby become engaged as active change agents.

The majority of respondents surveyed understand the importance of, and their role in, the transformation; however, they do not understand the impact of the change on their job and how they personally would be affected. At this point, it can be said that they feel that “change is happening to me,” rather than “I am participating in changing our system.”

80% of respondents feel confident they could contribute to the strategic planning efforts, but only 51% felt the plan actually guided their day-to-day activities. In other words, respondents do not understand how the transformation will be implemented or how it will change their work. The general concept of transformation is only just now being heard; it has yet to reach the level of “I know how it will impact my job.”

Another important component in the success of the transformation is an ability to translate how the sector strategy service delivery framework will affect actual service delivery processes. Although respondents feel confident in their ability to build relationships with business customers, they are not sure what the sector strategy framework for service delivery to both employers and jobseekers means to their ability to deliver service.

Cohort Focus Group Results

State and Regional Executives

State and regional executives do not feel they have all of the skills and resources needed to effectively assess organizational and system performance, provide technical assistance, take an active role in analyzing customer feedback or feel their staff are aware of how policy influences their work. Critical to the success of this transformation, this cohort does not yet know how operationalizing sector strategies will work, and how that will alter their duties as leaders within their respective organizations.

- This cohort needs a more clear understanding of sector strategies as an approach to improving the workforce system as a whole; and how that approach is executed at an operational level (e.g., how it alters job seeker services, business services, filling workforce
board slots, the analysis of LMI data). Understanding of sector strategies at this point remains at a conceptual level and there is limited confidence that, as leaders, they will be able to guide staff to understand their roles and implement necessary changes.

- While there is an understanding of where to access LMI data, there remain uncertainties about the most effective way to analyze data and use it to inform organizational decision-making. This was mostly articulated by the cohort as an observed staff need. However, executives acknowledge there could be value in training for how to guide such efforts. The new vision will require changes in resource allocations made by the WIBs (e.g., to reflect enhanced commitment to business services). However, there is not confidence yet in executives’ abilities to persuade and work with their boards to reallocate investments as appropriate.

- State and regional executive leaders recognize the importance of understanding and leveraging promising in-state existing models for identifying target sectors and revamping business services, in particular. The cohort feels they do not have the necessary opportunities or vehicles to connect with counterparts to learn about these efforts.

- While recognizing that confidentiality and data maintenance are significant hurdles to overcome to improve data sharing among One-Stop partners, the cohort does not yet know how to begin to address this or what their specific role would be in finding solutions. Even when co-located, partnering organizations often do not regularly meet to strategize or integrate efforts. The deeper issue here is a potential lack of understanding of how the partners are supposed to integrate efforts and a lack of consistent or aligned performance measures across partners that would incentivize greater collaboration.

- Ultimately, this cohort will be the key messengers (both outside the system and within) for the new vision. The assessment reveals a need for a unified (cross-state) simple message and the skillset to effectively motivate a diverse set of workers within the system. As a result of a lack of integration that has occurred, the cohort recognizes a misunderstanding
or lack of knowledge of the entire system’s service providers (e.g., career and technical education, economic developers, employer intermediaries) and opportunities to collaborate.

**Job Seeker Services**

For **Job Seeker Services** staff, significant barriers to collaboration include misaligned and outdated systems/technology, confidentiality issues, lack of true partnership integration, and inefficient work processes that do not promote partnering.

- There is a lack of clarity about what confidentiality rules really are and how they should be applied, resulting in a generalized attitude to “always err on the side of caution.” It seems clear that there are many “rules” that are still followed that are, in actuality, no longer in effect. The Partner for Success initiative focused on clarifying confidentiality issues, will provide consistent understanding about what is really allowable and not allowable in terms of sharing information. This will address an existing barrier to transformation, allowing workers to learn common intake procedures and generate information sharing among agencies and/or programs.

- Reporting systems do not integrate/share information and have different definitions for the same things – creating confusion and again causing a barrier to sharing information electronically. There is a need to develop communication software; then train on how to share information across systems. This is directly related to the confidentiality issues addressed above.

- Sector strategies are not understood, including the basics of sector approaches, such as constructing career pathways and identifying in-demand jobs. There is a need for jobseeker staff to receive training continuously from Business Services Team members, especially regarding training and hiring needs of specific sectors.

- There is a problem with duplicative assessments caused by not being able to share assessments across agencies and/or programs. This again, is related to the confidentiality issue mentioned above.

- Partners located in a One-Stop are often not integrated with mainstream (ES/WIA) staff in the One-Stop. Further, partner program capabilities and resources are not known or understood by all. Cross-agency training would generate better understanding of roles, goals, program objectives and reporting. Additionally, such training could help build understanding of how to overcome barriers to more effective service delivery to meet complex customer needs and obstacles to employment.

This cohort would also benefit from training in the following areas:

- Benefits assistance
- Provision of entrepreneurial assistance and development
- Computer skills—including social media for career development
• Techniques such as club-based activities
• Language and remedial educational services.

**One Stop Managers**

The assessment for **One-Stop Managers** and other service partner managers reveals a need for training in how to be an effective manager, a general need to understand job seeker services, business services and talent management processes, as well as labor market data and information.

• From the onset of the session, the group presented as being unclear as to their role in the transformation process. However, they are positive about being involved now, providing a hopeful pathway to positive engagement for this critical cohort. The group demonstrated consensus in the belief that to be effective in their positions, they must bring an innate skill and attitude of “compassionate determination” to overcome barriers and be effective leaders to their staff and meet the needs of their clients. In addition, the group identified the desire to be more informed of the disparate activities that are underway during this phase of the transformation rather than having to rely on rumor and second-hand information from colleagues who have been included in one or another project team.

• The most important aspect of what was learned in the assessment process was the level of readiness for change in this cohort. Middle managers are, in our opinion, essential for change to be successful and, at this time, the cohort is (generally speaking) resistant. Acceptance of their role in the transformation process will require an increased level of involvement in the change process and focused development in management skills.

• Brainstorming future state KSAs led to a discussion on external barriers felt by this cohort within the state government culture, management structure and what they saw as the rigidity of policy mandates and requirements that inhibit their ability to truly transform. This is further evidence of the need for involvement from this group of stakeholders in planning for and implementing the changes to come.

• The group identified the need and desire for intra-agency knowledge-sharing of programs and services, and the desire to reduce duplication of services. They identified the challenge of integrating reporting systems and the significant positive impact that a more user-friendly platform for accessing local labor market information would have on the entire Kentucky Workforce System.

• They uniformly identified the need for more robust professional development activities that are linked to recognized credentials within the Kentucky Workforce System to allow for staff incentive programs.
**Business Service Representatives**

The needs assessment of the Business Service Representatives revealed a lack of confidence in understanding of the system and services provided across agencies. This, we believe, is inhibiting their ability to anticipate opportunities for collaboration, to proactively outreach to businesses with a consultative, solutions-oriented approach to problems and thoughtfully provide cohesive information to assist the business community in talent management efforts. This is especially true with regard to sector-based service delivery, where they do not feel confident in their knowledge of how sectors influence their work roles.

- Through our interaction with this focus group, the cohort accepted the need to become more proactively engaged with businesses and take on the role of business consultants (proactive) as opposed to business services representative (reactive).
- Their ability to succeed in the transformed system will necessitate a focus on processes and tools in order to provide consistency of service and an ability to collaborate effectively. They will need to move from transactional (service delivery) to becoming partners with the business community in creating solutions that leverage cross-agency partnerships, technology and other resources and data/information.

As a result the knowledge, skills and attitudes they will require will need to create a different mindset and skillset, including a focus on business acumen (sector strategies, talent management processes, pipeline development strategies and tools), meeting leadership, understanding of the system as a whole and how all the partners fit together, and the ability to operationalize their knowledge of LMI.

This cohort will benefit from training in the following additional areas:

- Posting of job openings and candidate recruitment techniques
- Interviewing techniques
- Computer skills—including social media for career development
- Use of labor market information
- Employee needs assessment training, including OJT, customized training, and incumbent worker training
- Providing support to entrepreneurs, helping persons expand their business and assistance with downsizing or business closure

**Intake and Reception Staff**

The focus group for Intake and Reception Staff revealed the fact that in many program offices, intake and reception is not staffed by a dedicated person, but is a shared responsibility that the staff covers on a “rotational” basis or on an as-needed basis in addition to their regular job
responsibilities. This underscores the importance of cross-training and a more thorough understanding of all staff of the System and its resources.

- The needs assessment showed that Receptionist/Library staff are not confident in the knowledge of services, but still feel they route visitors to appropriate staff. Upon further exploration of these findings with the Focus Group, it was determined that this inconsistency likely demonstrated that staff were confident in their ability to route visitors to the appropriate staff in their specific program or area, but not outside of that program or area. They stated that maintaining Business Acumen (understanding of the system and how it operates) was a large issue, and that there needs to be a way to sustain learning and information in a place/way where it’s not just “in one person’s head.”
- About one-third of Reception/Library staff survey respondents indicated that they have not received customer services training, which the focus group validated as a large gap in knowledge and competencies for the reception function, both in the current state and in what is needed to support the System’s transformational vision.
- In general, the intake/reception focus group felt that everyone in the Kentucky Workforce System would be more receptive to change if they were kept informed. They stated that the System needs better channels for internal communication to help achieve this.
- While not a training need, it is worthy of note here that the group also strongly felt the title of Receptionist should be changed to Resource Specialist to give the position more credence and truly reflect what the job entails.
- Computer skills presented a large knowledge gap for Reception and Library staff and an area that they felt was becoming increasingly important as more information is needed and shared among staff in order to provide the necessary services to customers.

**Educators**

**Teachers and Principals** are confident in their ability to provide customized and on-the-job training. They are also comfortable with providing job application assistance, soft skill training, and interviewing skills assistance. An area where they are not up-to-date is a thorough understanding of the system and all the resources that might enable them to collaborate in reaching customers in need of their services and expertise. It was clear this cohort is eager to collaborate and share resources and knowledge.

- Their lack of knowledge of the system impedes their ability to develop partnerships within the system and foster business relationships that will assist their students and programs. Providing this cohort with methods to access partners already engaged within the workforce system would not only increase the depth and breadth of their partnerships, it would also reduce duplication of efforts being made to accomplish the same goals.
- Their lack of understanding about the system partners is a barrier to collaboration and the ability to reach students with either expanded or duplicative services. This includes services
such as job assistance, counseling, and resume services. The technical school personnel spent much of the discussion time questioning the WIA representative about services offered and attempting to work through ways to incorporate some of these services into their structure.

- Technical school personnel were unclear as to their role in the focus groups meeting. They felt like they were a totally separate entity and searched for relevancy. The group (which included five technical school personnel at various levels within the school system, and one WIA counselor) were able to quickly develop a list of current KSA’s (knowledge, skills and attitudes) required, but struggled with the "future" list due to the fact that they were unaware the transformed State plan included them.

- This group voiced skepticism about sustainability of the transformed state and likened it to "No Child Left Behind" and other initiatives that become less important as administrations come and go. While being guardedly excited about services they could utilize from other agencies, they remained cautious of becoming too entrenched in how to realign themselves within the transformed plan.

In addition to training about the system and how it operates, this cohort would benefit from training in the following areas:

- Skills transferability
- Interpretation of assessment results
- Computer skills—including social media for career development
- Career change and transition planning
- Services for diverse populations and remedial educational services.

**Conclusion and Next Steps**

The online survey and focus group activities summarized here provide us unique and meaningful insight into the training needs of a system poised for significant transformation. We were gratified by the positive engagement of so many system staff in these early efforts to help us better understand those needs, and anticipate these results will benefit our work to define effective training solutions and recommendations for the future. The scope of transformation envisioned for the Kentucky Workforce System will require long-term, concentrated communication and professional development, which the KWA can be particularly well-suited to provide.

As indicated in these pages, training needs exist in many and diverse areas – from computer skills to supervisory and management skills, and more. Of critical import, we believe, is the need to clearly and vividly “paint a tapestry” of a future vision that all stakeholders can understand. Creating a compelling “vision” of a future Kentucky Workforce System is a foundational first step toward
allowing all system stakeholders to understand the transformation we seek and their potential role in that change. Absent such an understanding, it will be impossible to introduce new expectations and ultimate accountability for an enhanced level of performance.

Therefore, in KWA’s all important “first tier” training intervention (as anticipated in Kentucky’s RFP), there will be a need to focus on the following training needs as a minimum:

- Change management skills
- Collaboration skills (teams)
- Communication skills
- Leadership skills
- Business/System Acumen training (knowledge of the future state, roles and responsibilities).

We are particularly focused also on the critical role(s) of middle-level managers as agents and supporters of change and transformation. Our design will need to address this area, as we believe the needs analysis phase of this project has clearly identified this as a critical success factor for KWA and the transformation it is meant to support.

Other training needs identified here (i.e., computer skills, LMI application, certification standards, customer support services, sector skills, and others) will also need to be addressed and will become the focus of our detailed KWA Curriculum Plan. That Plan will address the full breadth of the training need identified here. Toward that end, the list of cohort needs identified within this report will be compared to existing training assets within the Kentucky system, which will be inventoried through a Training Asset Survey now being readied for release.

Ultimately then, the training needs identified here together with the inventory of current assets will flow into both our design of first tier training and our recommendations in the overall KWA Curriculum Plan, which will become the capstone of our efforts in the project.

As we move into our next phase of the KWA Project – the training design and development phase – we will continue to rely on the expertise of the KWA Steering Team and other system stakeholders, who have so generously aided our needs analysis activity and these findings.
Reception Staff

n=31

Teachers: Services to Employers

n=77