

# Universal Design for the Workforce Development System

As the workforce development system strives to meet the diverse needs of all its customers, including individuals experiencing multiple barriers to employment, it is imperative that personnel working for and with One-Stop Centers and other organizations in the workforce investment system have a clear understanding of how to design programs, services, and activities to provide genuine, effective, and meaningful opportunities for all customers. Universal design should be reflected in all elements of the workforce system. Multiple functions performed by One-Stop Centers/other workforce organizations need to be addressed when thinking about overall design. Key functions include outreach and marketing, registration and orientation, screening and assessment, service coordination, service delivery, employer marketing and services, capacity building/staff training, and operations/management.

Universal Design for the Workforce Development System provides a blueprint for creating flexible goals, methods, materials, assessments, activities, and services that meet the needs of diverse job seekers. It calls for designs that from the outset accommodate the greatest variety of individuals, making costly and unattractive after-the-fact modifications unnecessary. An example of this concept is closed captioning, which was originally designed for individuals with hearing impairments but is now used every day by people in gyms, at sports bars, or at home when they cannot have the volume on.

Achieving universal design may involve changes in policy and the physical environment as well as program design and practice. By structuring policies, operational practices, services, and the physical environment to benefit the greatest number of people, workforce personnel and program operators can better meet their customers' needs.

Adopting a universal design approach within the workforce development system enhances the cost-effectiveness of the system while improving the quality of services and performance outcomes. Universal design provides flexibility and offers multiple means of:

- **Representing information**—Giving job seekers various ways of acquiring knowledge
- **Expressing ideas**—Offering customers alternatives for demonstrating what they know and can do
- **Engaging job seekers**—Tapping into customers' unique interests, skills, and abilities

Universal design strategies reflect practices that have been demonstrated over time to be effective in meeting customers' needs. While originally developed in response to customers with disabilities, these strategies and practices are universal and may serve as a template for providing meaningful and effective services and supports for all job seekers, particularly those with multiple barriers to employment.

The following matrix gives examples of universally designed strategies across the workforce development system. Universal Design for the Workforce Development System calls for looking beyond physical features to include local policies and administrative practices as well as service programming. These examples give systems a place to start thinking; local areas can expand these examples based on their own communities.

	<b>Outreach and Marketing</b>	<b>Registration and Orientation</b>	<b>Screening and Assessment</b>	<b>Service Coordination</b>	<b>Service Delivery</b>	<b>Employer Marketing and Services</b>	<b>Capacity Building/Staff Training</b>	<b>Operations/Management</b>
<b>Policy</b>	Opportunities are created for representatives of diverse populations (e.g., people with disabilities, English as a second language learners) to inform the system of their communities' needs. These representatives and organizations are encouraged to participate in strategic planning, vendor reviews, and similar processes.	Policies are developed whereby all partners within the workforce system—such as Employment Services, Job Training, Veterans Services, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Adult Education—use a common intake form for all new customers.	Tests are selected and administered based on their effectiveness in measuring a job seeker's strengths rather than measuring the extent of their challenges. Specifications are provided for reasonable modifications and accommodations during the testing process.  Policies are in place that allow, with consent, the results of assessments and screenings to be shared across the organizations and institutions serving an individual.	Workforce development system funds are used flexibly for job site supports as an adjunct to services provided by other partners. For instance, job development services could be provided by a community provider while on-the-job support services were paid for through WIA training money.	Payment mechanisms reward providers that serve persons with significant barriers to employment. Consider various fees and methods of payment (e.g., milestones, flat rate, outcome-based) for providing individualized employment assistance.	Employers need coordinated customer support to respond to their needs. For example, business service staff members may be assigned to specific business or industries so that they can be more responsive to employers and develop greater expertise in negotiating and networking in their sector.	Staff performance evaluations include the requirement that staff members participate in training on effectively serving customers with particular barriers to employment.  Certifications and licensing are created and based on professional knowledge, skills, and abilities standards.	Customers are part of the workforce development system decisionmaking process through participation on WIBs, youth councils, or another ongoing regular mechanism.
<b>Practice (Administration/Operations)</b>	Workforce providers contact community groups to encourage their members and customers to utilize the available services.  Satisfied customers of diverse backgrounds and ages reach out to others within their respective groups to promote services available through the workforce development system.	All customers are invited to attend general orientation sessions rather than being diverted to population-specific sessions.  Registration and orientation sessions are held in locations that are accessible and comfortable for everyone.	Workforce development staff members use positive, capacity-based exploration to facilitate strengths, interests, aptitudes, and skills identification. The process incorporates accommodations into the assessment process for customers with disabilities.	Workforce staff members maintain a list of local resources designed to assist individuals with barriers to employment, and make that information available to both staff and customers. Both youth and adults are involved in the process of mapping these resources.	Staff roles are flexible enough to allow One-Stop employees to individualize service delivery in response to customers' needs.	Mechanisms are in place for staff to gain an awareness of industry needs. For example, Business Service Representatives have flexibility in their roles so that they can go out and visit with employers at their businesses.	The knowledge, skills, and abilities that service practitioners need to provide effective services play an important part in the hiring and promotion of staff.	Customer satisfaction and other feedback are elicited in a variety of ways (e.g., verbal, written, electronic, via telephone) to allow all customers the opportunity to provide input.
<b>Programming (Services)</b>	When providing general information about workforce development services, staff include information about specialized programs, services, activities, and supports to all customers.	An internal mechanism has been established for staff to identify individuals who may be eligible for or need services beyond the core offerings.  Registration and orientation take place in inviting and friendly settings.	Staff members use a variety of tools and opportunities to identify specific accommodation or support needs. For instance, a customer may sit in on a class of interest being offered by a training provider, thus giving staff information about the customer's learning style and/or technology needs.	When appropriate, the planning group working with an individual includes a range of partners for the purpose of identifying potential funding options. These partners may include Vocational Rehabilitation, Mental Health, Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities, TANF, Social Security, and/or Medicaid.	All programs, services, and activities are accessible to and usable by as many individuals as possible, including those with multiple barriers to employment.	Staff members provide employers information and support regarding internships, apprenticeships, and job-shadowing activities.	Staff members have been trained on the range of service delivery options available to individuals with multiple barriers to employment and how to assist individuals in determining their best employment options. Staff members make use of assistive technology and other accommodations when appropriate.  Professional knowledge, skills, and abilities drive staff training.	A "mystery shopper," who accesses the One-Stop Center posing as a new user wanting to receive services, is used to help identify areas of need and provide recommendations for improvement.
<b>Physical</b>	In addition to accessible on-site space, off-site presentations (such as job fairs or outreach to faith-based organizations) are held in locations and delivered in ways that are accessible to and usable by all prospective customers. This includes people with disabilities, youth, and those who do not drive.	A guided tour of the facility is offered as part of the standard orientation to services, highlighting available modifications, accommodations, and assistance (including specialized services and supports).	Interactive software programs are available that allow customers with various learning styles to access and benefit from the program.	Provider staff members are knowledgeable about programs, services, and activities that are accessible to and usable by individuals with multiple barriers to employment.	Private space for self-directed services is available for customers who have difficulty paying attention or focusing with background noise.	As a service, workforce development staff members assist employers to develop access solutions and accommodations at their workplace.	Staff members know how to procure and use various equipment and materials to assist customers with unique needs such as disabilities. Equipment may include telecommunications devices for the deaf (TTY/TDD), accessible workstations, etc.	A "Compliance Team" comprised of local stakeholders, including those from diverse communities, is convened to assess services across the array of required compliance issues.

# Ideas for Practical Application

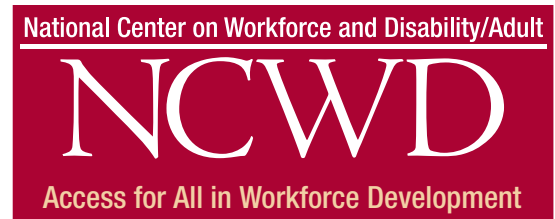
- **Self-assessment:** This document has been structured around the common functions of One-Stop Centers and other organizations in the workforce investment system, allowing an easy evaluation of your system's current practices. While these elements are not binding or absolute, they provide a mechanism to compare and evaluate your day-to-day activities.
- **Strategic planning:** These elements can be used as a list of priorities and goals to guide your thinking about the best course of development for a state or local plan, or simply for the service design of a One-Stop Center or other organization in the workforce investment system.
- **Training:** This resource is a good source of information for internal staff/partner training and development, as it provides both general strategies and examples of practices for carrying out required functions.
- **Partnership-building:** Because these strategies and practices speak to the needs of any job seeker, they can assist One-Stop Centers and other organizations in the workforce investment system to build relationships with a wide range of community groups that focus on a variety of barriers to employment.
- **Policy development:** This planning document can guide workforce board and One-Stop operator policy development, and educate stakeholders about the necessary movements toward systems and policy change.
- **Effective service delivery:** This planning document can help bridge the gap between good policies and intentions and effective practice.

## Resources

For additional information or assistance on Universal Design in the Workforce Development System, contact the following centers:

### Adult services

National Center on Workforce and Disability/Adult  
 Institute for Community Inclusion  
 UMass Boston  
 100 Morrissey Blvd.  
 Boston, MA 02125  
 888/886-9898 (toll-free voice/TTY)  
 contact@onestops.info  
 www.onestops.info



### Youth services

National Collaboration on Workforce and Disability/Youth  
 Institute for Educational Leadership  
 4455 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 310  
 Washington, DC 20008  
 877/871-0744 (toll-free voice)  
 877/871-0665 (toll-free TTY)  
 contact@ncwd-youth.info  
 www.ncwd-youth.info



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