

Lower Shore

(Somerset, Worcester, Wicomico)

Workforce Investment Board

Local Unified Five Year Strategic Plan

For

One-Stop Operations

2000-2005

Foreword

The following local unified five-year strategic plan was developed as a collaborative effort of required partners, local elected officials, employees, interested parties, educational systems, secondary and post secondary, and myriad human services agencies. All came with the common purpose of maximizing the potential of the Lower Shore's (Somerset, Worcester and Wicomico Counties) human capital.

Using the Governor's Workforce Investment Board format found in Strategic Planning Guidelines for Local Unified Plans, August 1999, the planning team assessed challenges and recommended actions relative to meeting local needs. The planning team considered points-of-view of youth and adult job seekers, displaced workers and workers with special needs.

Also given great consideration was the employer's ability to access local labor pools and to provide relevant data and information as to employment vacancies and the skills, knowledge, aptitudes and attitudes necessary to appropriately match job seekers to vacancies.

The initial work was conducted in four facilitated sessions. The outstanding spirit of cooperation and participation in these sessions exemplified the united purpose to meet the state's vision of:

A Maryland where every person maximizes his or her career potential, and all employers have the human resources they need to grow and prosper.

Lower Shore Local Unified Five Year Strategic Plan 2000 - 2005

A. Vision and Mission:

Vision:

A local workforce fully prepared to meet business challenges throughout the next century.

Mission:

To provide a unified approach offering job seekers and employers a strategic mix and sequence of services that aggressively promotes economic development in the Lower Shore counties of Somerset, Worcester and Wicomico.

B. Planning Team

The planning team represented all three Lower Shore counties. (Table B.1, Data Summary) It was divided into two emphasis areas, the One-Stop Operations/Service Provider Workgroup and the WIA Youth Work Group.

Table B.1, Data Summary

	Area (Square Miles)	Population*	Labor Force
Lower Shore	1227	148,140	91,636
Somerset	338	26,000	11,638
Worcester	475	42,115	31,592
Wicomico	414	80,025	48,406

Sources: Somerset, Worcester, Salisbury-Wicomico Economic Development, Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation Office of Market Analysis, * Estimated

The Youth Work Group (enclosure 1) provided nominees for the WIB Youth Council and a comprehensive series of career readiness criteria for youth programs. The work group's vision is to have access for all services under one roof – as part of One-Stop Operations.

The One-Stop Operation/Service Provider Workgroup (enclosure 2) provided local needs assessment that addressed trends in hiring, skills requirements and education and training. It also put forth criteria relative to establishing One-Stop Operations services at existing Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation locations at start-up on July 1, 2000. The guidance includes providing expanded services in community-based locations more accessible to the general population within five years. Year to Year Milestones and evaluation criteria are included in the Five-year Operations Plan.

Continuous oversight will be accomplished through the Lower Shore Workforce Investment Board with consideration of Youth Council input relative to the needs of local youth preparing for entry into the workforce.

C. Public Participation:

In order to involve the general public in the development of this document, the planning team made personal solicitations to former recipients of services and placed legal announcements in the local area newspapers (certification attached). An article featuring WIB efforts was written and published by Thomson Chesapeake, owners of fourteen local newspapers. The article emphasized the need for public involvement.

All meetings were held in easily accessible public facilities to encourage participation. The meeting locations were the Wicomico County Public Library and Wor-Wic Community College.

Meetings were announced on the World-wide Web at www.lowershore.org, the Private Industry Council Website. The minutes of each meeting were also posted on the site.

D. Current Efforts and Situations:

To the credit of local human service agencies efforts to improve local job seekers' abilities to meet industry-validated skills, an excellent and functional informal network has been established. Agencies provide unique services and are familiar with what others provide. They are able to make appropriate referrals for intensive and training services.

Another key factor that addresses local needs is the cooperative effort among human service agencies, education and local business. Members of these different segments of the local economy frequently meet on issues relative to economic development. Feedback on emerging trends and educational efforts to prepare local workers is continuous.

Business leaders share their needs for skilled workers through sources such as the Lower Shore Advanced Technology Center at Wor-Wic Community College, the Lower Shore Manufacturing Network (LSMN) located at Salisbury State University, school improvement team participation, surveys, conferences, Chambers of Commerce, etc. Current needs suggest the necessity for some form of post-secondary education, be it trade related, academically based or skill enhancement.

Transportation is a major problem. Efforts to provide regional public transportation is being researched by the Project Management Group at Salisbury State University in a collaborative effort with the business community and human service agencies. Currently, many larger employers are providing their own transportation (bus/van service) to get employees to job sites.

Business leaders and human service workers cite the lack of childcare services as a barrier to placing job seekers in available vacancies. The problem is compounded for second and third shift vacancies. The Human Resources Roundtable of the LSMN is currently addressing this issue and is looking for alternatives to meet the needs of local employers.

Information provided by local employers consistently states that many secondary school graduates are not fully prepared for entry-level work. The most recurring feedback is a poor work ethic, inability to communicate effectively, and difficulty with math and measurement. To that end, local businesses are using Career Connections programs, school improvement team participation and other innovative programs to address these issues directly with educators and students.

The local plan addresses education and training of present and future workers. Those currently employed need mechanisms to stay technically proficient as information technology advances.

Workers seeking new high-tech skills to facilitate job changes into emerging growth areas and displaced workers will find their needs addressed in this plan, as will non-school completers. Under-educated workers will be able to prepare for employment under the auspices of this plan. Linkages to intensive and training services are paramount to achieving the vision of a completely prepared local workforce.

In an effort to prepare future workers the plan addresses the continuation of youth development in such ways as providing tutoring, summer employment, occupational skills, training, mentoring, alternative schools and follow-up services.

E. Local Area Challenges:

Area 1: Improve the skill levels of Maryland’s current and emerging workforce.

- The Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation projects increases in high-tech employment on the Lower Shore. (High Tech Employment Data - 1997) The electronics manufacturing area of the local economy is expected to drive increases in needs for electronics assemblers, technicians and engineers.
- Manufacturing support services such as information technology managers, maintenance personnel and human resources will also experience increases. The local industry is rooted in microwave filters but is expanding into magnetic switches, avionics and other high-tech electronics-based products.
- Seasonal employment in hospitality and tourism creates difficulties for local employers as workers leave jobs for summer work which often pay more, although for a shorter period of time. (Table E.1.0, 1998 Unemployment Rates) The hospitality and tourism industry actively recruits outside the local area, including looking for foreign workers abroad, to address seasonal employment needs.

Table E.1.0 1998 Unemployment Rates

	Peak	Low
Lower Shore	13.5	4.9
Somerset	12.3	7.0
Worcester	21.6	3.7
Wicomico	6.6	4.0

Source: Civilian Labor Force, Employment and Unemployment by Place of Residence, Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation

- The service and manufacturing industries are experiencing difficulties in finding qualified entry-level workers. Employment rates are at the lowest point in years causing the available labor pool to be largely comprised of hard-to-place workers. (Table E.1.1, Unemployment Rates – August 1999) These workers generally require intensive services and training prior to and during employment

Table E.1.1, Unemployment Rates - August 1999

Maryland	3.6
Lower Shore	4.3
Somerset	6.1
Worcester	3.0
Wicomico	4.2

Source: Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation

- The impact of an under-educated work force is in some cases inhibiting business expansion and/or new business development. This issue is apparent on many levels:
 - Graduates entering into the workplace have inadequate skills or education inappropriate to the needs of current business.
 - Workers who were trained and entered into the workforce years ago are finding their skills outdated or no longer relevant.
 - Ever-changing workplace technology renders even the best-prepared and educated worker ineffective at times.

Area 2: Improve access to workforce development information and services.

- Because of the rural nature of this region, job seekers must travel long distances and often meet with multiple service providers to find an employment match. Due to the limitations of public transportation and the distances necessary to travel to obtain the employment, education, training and information services they need, prospective workers find it difficult to seek or complete the training or education necessary to gain and maintain employment.

- The location of services is also a limiting factor in some cases. A case in point: In Somerset County a job seeker living in Deal Island must travel to Crisfield if they wish to use services from the Maryland Job Service. While both locations are in the same county it is an hour-long trip of forty-five miles due to the geographic restrictions. Services are not always located in the most convenient population centers.

Area 3: Improve the quality and timeliness of information about local and regional labor markets, training providers, economic development, and demographic changes.

- Economic development data and labor market indicators are available currently through official sources such as CareerNet. Local data are sometimes difficult to extract from these data sources and are usually offered by county; not by region. The regional implication of this data may not be readily apparent and requires extended analysis to make it relevant.

- Data stored on Internet sites requires not only access to a computer but multiple links as the information is layered and is often only accessible to experienced users. Job seekers may not have Internet access or the computer skills necessary to use available information.

Area 4: Ensure that all youth are prepared for further educational opportunities and entry into careers.

- The Lower Shore has been addressing this issue regionally for several years. Youth programs have made great strides in Somerset, Worcester and Wicomico Counties through business and educational system collaboration. Proactive in-school programs addressing career readiness, i.e. skills needed, core competencies in math, science, English, work ethic, etc. must be continued. Requiring additional attention are programs for at-risk youth, out-of-school youth, non-completers, and those with minimal work-related skills. Add to this youth with disabilities and those from disadvantaged family situations there remains a formidable task for youth, service providers and employers.

Area 5: Remove systemic barriers that hinder an individual's ability to secure job opportunities and prevent employers from accessing a needed workforce.

- As addressed in item D transportation is a major barrier to seeking and keeping a job. The lack of regional scheduled public transportation greatly inhibits a worker's ability to get to work on time or at all. Efforts are being made to improve this issue but an efficient and effective solution remains a long way off.

- Lack of available childcare is also an inhibitor to matching workers to job opportunities, especially for positions available for shifts other than day shift.
- Healthcare benefits, shift differentials, company sponsored transportation and higher starting salaries are currently used to attract workers to available jobs.

F. Strategies:

Area 1: Improve the skill levels of Maryland's current and emerging workforce.

- Knowledge and skill level improvement will continue to be addressed by enhancing existing programs and alliances.
- Current workforce needs are being upgraded and improved through approved training providers and educational institutions. Wor-Wic Community College is the premier provider of industry-related and validated skill standards. Through the auspices of the Advanced Technology Center, curriculum in such area as manufacturing technology, electronics, engineering, computer information systems, Computer Aided Drafting and Design (CADD) and Computer Aided Manufacturing (CAM) is developed and kept current.
- Articulated agreements with local boards of education, Wor-Wic Community College, Salisbury State University and the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, make programs such as the Maryland State Department of Education's 2+2+2 an effective reality for current students, and makes skill advancement easily accessible to current workers.
- Wor-Wic Community College makes extensive use of industry-driven advisory boards to ensure appropriate rigor and relevance. The local school systems also use industry-driven advisory boards and school improvement teams to address workforce issues down to and including primary grades.
- Intensive and training service providers have ready access to Wor-Wic's training and educational offerings as well as additional services to assist in assessing and planning individual training needs.

Area 2: Improve access to workforce development information and services.

- Access to workforce development and training services will be greatly enhanced through the establishment of the One-Stop Operation system. At start-up on July 1, 2000, the One-Stop Operation will be the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (DLLR) located in the State Multi-service Building in Salisbury, Maryland. It will become operational with full support of partnering agencies. Satellite locations will be established in DLLR Job Service offices in Berlin and Crisfield, Maryland. This selection is based upon the "grandfathering" option of establishing the One-Stop Operation and is the recommendation of the planning workgroup.
- Access to information and services will be further enhanced through the Somerset, Worcester and Wicomico County library systems and private facilities with Internet access. Enhanced access provides job seekers expanded hours of operation, access in remote locations, personal assistance with core services and referral to intensive services.
- Information will be accessible to job seekers and employers on a locally designed regional web site with links to all partners, economic development and regional labor market information. It is envisioned that this product eventually be an enhanced version of CareerNet tailored to regional needs with access to global information.
- The long-term five-year plan envisions an integrated database with Intranet participation and a standardized customer profile. Future plans also place the physical location of the One-Stop and satellite locations in more easily accessible venues which are more conveniently located to those in need of services.

Area 3: Improve the quality and timeliness of information about local and regional labor markets, training providers, economic development, and demographic changes.

- Electronic links to a common access page provide the ability for each partnering agency to maintain and update the site as necessary. The use of Internet and eventually Intranet platforms will make the most current information available at the fastest possible speed. The minimization of paper products greatly enhances distribution of information about labor markets, economic development, demographics and training providers. It creates an electronic platform to match job seekers with employers.

Area 4: Ensure that all youth are prepared for further educational opportunities and entry into careers.

- Increased participation of employers in school-based learning activities will improve chances of youth being prepared for entry into careers. Programs based upon local manufacturing industry involvement in Career Connections initiatives can be expanded to reach at-risk, out-of-school and adjudicated youth.
- Expansion of school and business partnerships to include a larger segment of service and hospitality and tourism industries will reach more youth with information that is relevant to gaining and keeping employment. Partnerships with agencies serving adjudicated, at-risk, out-of-school and other youth are being developed and nurtured.
- Request for proposal to service youth programs will meet criteria established by the Youth Council.
- To increase chances of success those programs will include parental/guardian guidance and involvement, a career development plan, the goal of achieving a certificate, GED, or degree, history of past achievements, a business plan that address a targeted group and has measurable outcomes. Additionally the learning will be work-based and include 360 degree evaluations from the employee/participant and the mentor/coach. A period of mentoring and follow-up services will be included.

Area 5: Remove systemic barriers that hinder an individuals' ability to secure job opportunities and prevent employers from accessing a needed workforce.

- Systemic barriers in transportation and childcare are being addressed regionally by human service organizations, the Project Management Group at Salisbury State University and through the LSMN human resources roundtable. Partnering agencies will combine resources in a collaborative effort to address these needs. The development of a regional transportation system requires the involvement of all One-Stop partners and is being actively addressed.
- The future holds the idea of facilitating the establishment of child-care facilities with adequate capacity to meet the needs of workers and employers, especially for second and third shifts. Wor-Wic Community College could expand or create additional courses in order to accommodate pre-licensing requirements.

- Innovation, creativity and collaboration of the business community, service providers and job seekers will remain an ongoing initiative to address these two critical needs.

G. Evaluation and Continuous Improvement:

This plan will be evaluated periodically by the WIB using the metrics for evaluations and continuous improvement that are found in the Operational Plan.

H. Program Planning:

Two-page summaries of partner agencies are attached.

ASSURANCE OF NONDISCRIMINATION AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

No otherwise qualified individual with a disability shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity conducted by the Local Workforce Investment Board and its one-stop operators.

The LWIB and its one-stop operators will provide reasonable accommodation to qualified individuals with disabilities to assure access to aid, benefits, services, training, and employment, unless providing the accommodation would cause undue hardship.

The LWIB and its one-stop operators will take appropriate steps to assure that communications with individuals with disabilities are as effective as communications with other individuals.