

Opening Doors for **Everyone**



Providing Outstanding Customer Service at One-Stop Career Centers

Toolkit

Topics

Readiness to Serve All Customers

Strengths-Based Customer Service

“Focusing on people’s aspirations, capacities, and skills is a powerful act. The attention itself is reaffirming”¹

For additional resources visit: <https://doors.workforce3one.org>

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¹ Saleebey, D. (Ed.). (2006). *The strengths perspective in social work practice* (4th Ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

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GOALS OF TOOLKIT

This toolkit is designed to provide you, as a One-Stop Career Center staff member, with the following:

- An enhanced overall level of comfort when providing service to customers with a diverse array of backgrounds and needs.
- Knowledge of strengths-based approaches to customer service, in which it's assumed that all customers have certain strengths and are the primary resources for their own empowerment.
- Tools to create partnerships with customers to help them achieve their goals.
- Experiences, insights, and products from your fellow practitioners.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Track your progress as you gain knowledge, skills, and experience in serving all customers. This self-assessment tool maps to the materials and resources in this toolkit.

Today's date: _____	Date _____ 3 Months		Date _____ 6 Months		Date _____ 1 year		If your answer is <i>no</i> , please review the referenced section
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	
1. I am increasingly comfortable serving all One-Stop Center customers.							Overall toolkit
2. I am growing in my awareness of my readiness to serve different customer groups.							Readiness to Serve Scale
3. I am continuing to enjoy and appreciate differences among customers.							Difference = Difference exercise; Potential Differences Among your Customers
4. I am adapting my customer service approach in ways that allow me to provide service in meaningful ways to each customer.							Key Principles of Quality Customer Service
5. I am taking time each day to focus on <i>my</i> needs so that I may better serve others.							Taking Time for Yourself
6. I am incorporating the key principles of strengths-based customer service into all aspects of my job.							Key Elements of the Strengths-Based Approach to Customer Service
7. I am growing in my ability to see each customer as his or her primary resource in problem-solving and defining overall service goals.							Areas of Strengths; Practice Scenarios
8. I am recognizing myself as a coach, serving as an informational resource, trainer, trouble-shooter, mentor, and advocate for each individual's success in reaching his or her goals.							Coaching Customers to Success; Practice Scenarios

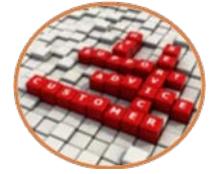
Adapted from: Aguilar, L., & Stokes, L. (1996). *Multicultural customer service: Providing outstanding service across cultures*. Burr Ridge, IL: Irwin Professional

Topic 1:
***READINESS TO SERVE
ALL CUSTOMERS***



WHY OUTSTANDING CUSTOMER SERVICE IS IMPORTANT

This toolkit aims to assist you in your work life by providing resources and training exercises that make serving customers more effective and rewarding.



Why is outstanding customer service important for frontline staff members?

1. Increased personal effectiveness leads to increased job satisfaction, which in turn leads to reduced stress and frustration.
2. Improved confidence in your ability and willingness to serve all customers makes you more effective with customers.

Why is outstanding customer service important for the customer?

1. Customers feel valued, respected, and heard, which contributes to their overall well-being.
2. Customers know they will receive the services they need to achieve their goals.

Why is outstanding customer service important for the organization?

1. It increases the organization's capacity to serve.
2. It increases the effectiveness and performance of the organization.

*"It can never be assumed that one size fits all when working with people. All customers appreciate meaningful, sincere answers to their questions"*² (Aguilar, L. & Stokes, L. p. 119)

² Adapted from: Aguilar, L., & Stokes, L. (1996). *Multicultural customer service: Providing outstanding service across cultures*. Burr Ridge, IL: Irwin Professional.

CUSTOMER SERVICE IS CENTRAL TO YOUR WORK³



Take a moment to reflect on the customer service aspect of your job. If you are new to the position or if you supervise frontline workers, take a moment to think about how many hours a frontline worker interacts with customers each day.

1. How many hours a day do you work with customers?

2. What do you want customers to say to others about the service you provide?

Providing customer service is central to your work. Serving customers well means meeting their needs in ways that are valuable and meaningful to them.

³ Adapted from: Aguilar, L., & Stokes, L. (1996). *Multicultural customer service: Providing outstanding service across cultures*. Burr Ridge, IL: Irwin Professional

READINESS-TO-SERVE SCALE

You can expect to encounter customers who are very different from you in a variety of ways.

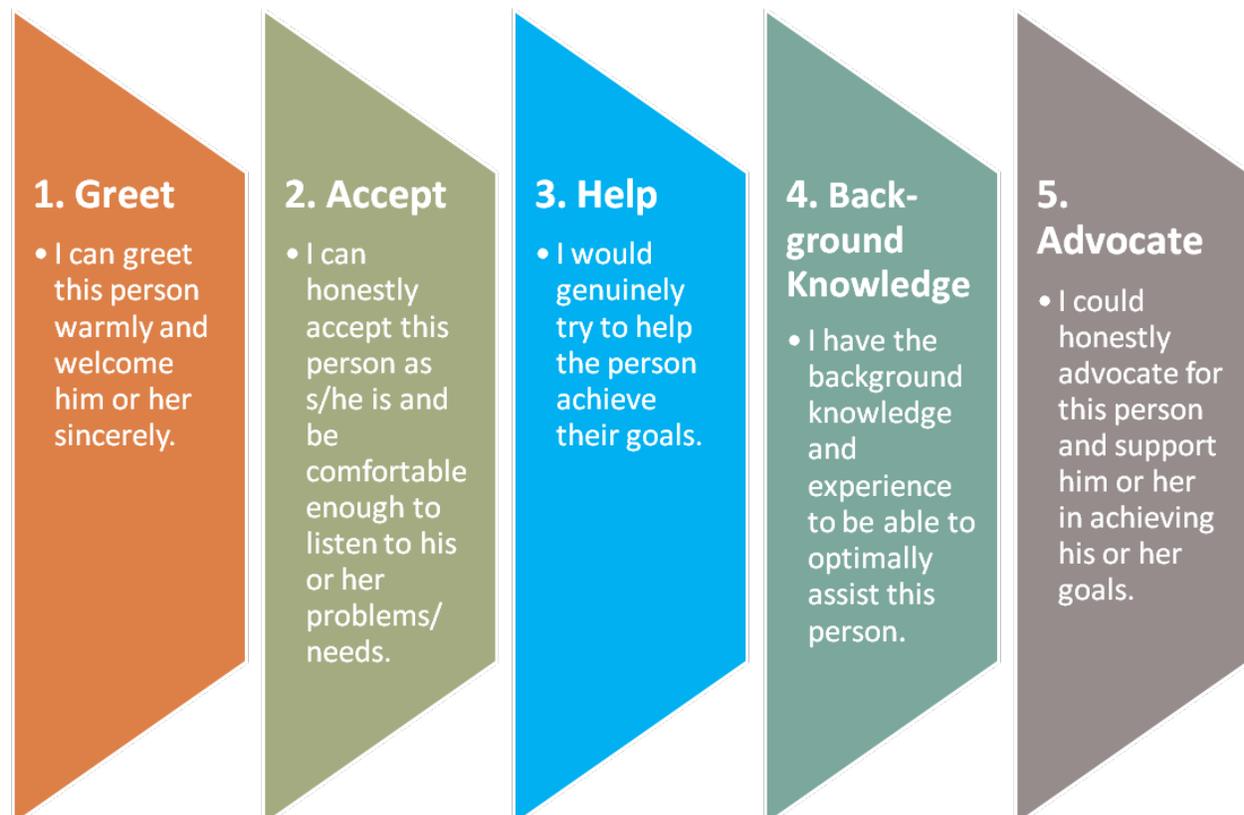


Some customers will have different cultural or generational backgrounds, which means they may have different individual and family values, a different native language, different notions of proper protocol and common courtesy and different communication styles (both verbal and non-verbal).

Other customers will have different needs because of sensory or mobility disabilities, and many customers will of course differ from you in age, gender, living circumstances, life history, and financial situation.

The Readiness-to-Serve Scale is a tool that helps you ascertain your readiness to serve *all* customers. Where you are on the scale may depend on which customer you have sitting in front of you.

Take a moment and think about different customer groups and how you might rate yourself on the scale below. Are you ready to provide outstanding customer service to a woman who speaks Spanish as her primary language? A 60 year-old Native American veteran? A visually-impaired Latina with three kids? Your neighbor? Your rating will likely be different for different individuals.



POTENTIAL DIFFERENCES AMONG YOUR CUSTOMERS

The customers that you serve are unique and vary in their beliefs and how they interact with one another. Sometimes people are not aware that their particular perspective may not be the same as others.

Read through the items below and think about whether you fully accept the ways other people may act, think, make decisions, plan, set goals, and express themselves. If you find that you are having difficulty, the toolkit activities will help you become more comfortable with the variation you'll encounter in your customers and provide you the opportunity to practice strengths-based approaches to customer service.

Differences do not have to be barriers to providing quality customer service. Instead, you can think of the differences between you and your customers as springing from the unique characteristics and strengths that each customer embodies.

VARIATIONS IN HOW PEOPLE APPROACH LIFE

Etiquette and Behavior	
• How people greet each other	• Importance of proper pronunciation of names
• Proper seating placement in a room	• How closely people stand next to each other
• What's considered polite and impolite	• What holidays are celebrated
• What is embarrassing	• How people use money, credit, and bartering
• Clothing styles	• The use of mass transit
Beliefs and Values	
• Perceived needs	• Whether privacy is desirable or undesirable
• The worthwhile goals in life	• Appropriate personal health care and hygiene
• The role of fate in determining one's life course	
Communication	
• Primary language	• Whether conversations should be formal or informal
• What should be said and what should be left unsaid	• The meaning of hand gestures, facial expressions, and other nonverbal communication
Human Relations	
• The identity of the individual	• The proper way to interact with strangers
• Hierarchy in business relationships	• How to interact with a person of authority (boss, police officer, teacher, etc)
• How to interact with a person who is serving you	• What behaviors are considered disrespectful
Time	
• How time is scheduled and used	• The importance of preparing for the future
• The importance of schedules	

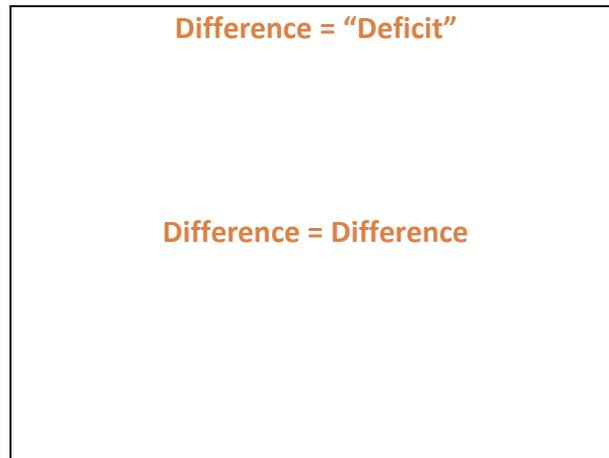
Modified from: Aguilar, L., & Stokes, L. (1996). *Multicultural customer service: Providing outstanding service across cultures*. Burr Ridge, IL: Irwin Professional.

EXERCISE: Difference = Difference

The following activity⁴ is designed to help you think about and assess your comfort level with people who have backgrounds and characteristics different from your own.

Step One: On a blank sheet of paper write in large letters at the top “**Difference = Deficit.**” Midway down the page, write “**Difference = Difference.**”

Example:



Step Two: Think back to and focus on the time and event in your life when you *first* recognized that you were different from other people and/or that they were different from you.

Once you are concentrating on that time and event, please write your answers to the following two questions under the **Difference = "Deficit"** heading:

1. How old were you at the time of the event?
2. At that time, would you say that the experience was positive, negative, or neutral?

If you are practicing this exercise in a small group, record and share with the group your responses to the questions.

While you might provide a different response, on average, people are between ages four and six when they first recognize that there are differences amongst people. This is the usual age that a child starts school or pre-school and comes in contact with larger numbers of diverse people. It is also common for the experience to be negative at the time that it was

⁴ Created by Anne Adams, Master Trainer

experienced—generally because others indicated that they perceived you as deficient in some way.

When you can connect with an experience in which others perceived you as deficient, it can help you understand how others may feel when they are perceived as having a deficit. If your recollection was a positive experience, then this exercise may reinforce for you how important it is for people to feel validated and respected, regardless of the circumstances. In either case, this exercise may help to frame your way of dealing with differences when providing customer service.

The next step will move you from a “Difference = Deficit” framework to a “Difference = Difference” framework. Seeing difference simply as difference—that is, as variation—not as deficit, empowers you to provide quality customer service to everyone who walks through the One-Stop Center doors.

Step Three: Take a few moments and consider the following scenario:

You are providing initial services to a customer for whom English is clearly a second language, although the person has an advanced college degree and significant teaching experience in her country of origin. She is seeking a teaching position. From time to time during your conversation, you have difficulty understanding her. She tells you about a number of places where she has applied for openings with no success.

On your sheet of paper, below the Difference = Deficit heading, write down what you might say to the customer if you believed that her language skills made her a deficient job seeker.

Here’s an example of a response from someone who believes this person is deficient. *“If you want to be successful in your search for a teaching position, you are going to have to improve your English.”* It is an explicit demand that the person change, that she correct the perceived deficiency. If you are doing this exercise with a small group, discuss your various responses and consider the impact on the customers.

Step Four: Focus on the **Difference = Difference** equation in the center of the paper. If you have a difference = difference mind-set, what service approaches would you use with the woman from the above scenario? Write your responses under the **Difference = Difference** heading.

Here’s an example from someone who has a difference = difference mindset. *“You are obviously well trained to be a teacher. To what extent do you think your English language skills are affecting your job search?”* Again, if you are doing this exercise with a small group, discuss your various responses and consider the impact on customers.

When **Difference = Difference**, the service provider recognizes the need to be guided by customers and their individual circumstances. This necessitates inquiring about customers

personally in order to serve them adequately. Often this means becoming comfortable with conversations around “socially taboo” topics such as religion, culture, and disability.

When you do this work well, you are practicing a major principle of **strengths-based customer service**. That is, you are working from the expectation that the individual is his or her own primary resource in problem-solving and guiding his or her receipt of services. The service provider assumes a coach-type role, serving as an informational resource, trainer, troubleshooter, mentor, and advocate for the individual’s success in reaching his or her goals.

Remember: It is virtually impossible to practice strengths-based customer service from the Difference = Deficit paradigm.



KEY PRINCIPLES OF QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

We’ve been focusing until now on the mindset you bring to serving customers who differ from you. We’ve taken this approach because your beliefs and attitudes about the people you serve are important determinants of how you treat them and interact with them, and therefore how well you meet their needs.



But while paying attention to one’s mindset is a crucial aspect of providing all customers with the very best service possible, it is not the only aspect. Equally important are the specifics of the actual interactions between you and your customers.

Listed below are some of the nuts and bolts of what goes into providing customers from diverse backgrounds with quality service. Although the guidelines listed are directed to enhancing your interactions with customers who differ from you, most apply no matter who you are serving. As you read through the principles, think about what it will actually mean to put each principle into practice.

<p>Make people feel welcome.</p>	<p>Customers need to feel that they belong the moment they walk in. Avoid creating the impression—through inattention, facial expressions, and other verbal or non-verbal means—that the customer’s arrival means an added burden.</p>
<p>Create an atmosphere in which people are comfortable asking for assistance.</p>	<p>A reticence to express one’s needs is a major barrier to getting those needs met, so frontline staff members should do everything in their power to break down any reluctance to ask for help.</p>
<p>Don’t automatically steer people to “targeted populations” services.</p>	<p>While programs for specific populations are helpful resources, these should not be the only options for customers. All customers are entitled to the same full range of services.</p>
<p>Speak to the customer directly.</p>	<p>If another person accompanies an individual to a One-Stop Center (such as a personal assistant or family member), be sure to speak directly to the individual who is applying for or receiving services, even if the companion is acting as a translator. Do not ask the companion questions about the job seeker.</p>
<p>Become familiar with local resources for different populations and develop relationships with the people providing the services.</p>	<p>One-Stop centers can assist people not only by directly providing services, but also by learning what additional resources are available in the community, and how customers can use these resources to help meet their support needs. Consider co-enrolling customers in more than one program – remember to leverage resources.</p>
<p>Provide many opportunities for feedback.</p>	<p>Create an environment where customers feel welcome to provide feedback about the quality of Career Center services. Provide both confidential (anonymous) and direct feedback opportunities.</p>

If you don't know, ask!	If you're not sure that a particular service approach is appropriate for a customer, explain what you are thinking about and ask if he or she is comfortable with that approach.
Relax.	Don't get overly concerned about doing something "wrong" when you work with underserved populations. If you are friendly, courteous, and respectful, and provide opportunities for feedback, you are well on your way to meeting the needs of all customers.

Adapted from: Access for All: A Resource Manual for Meeting the Needs of One-Stop Customers with Disabilities

TAKING TIME FOR YOURSELF

You can better serve others by creating a supportive environment for yourself and taking some time each day to focus on your needs. This is particularly true when growing demand for services from the unemployed population increases your workload.

De-stress	Frontline work is demanding in many ways. It is challenging for frontline workers to be “up” all of the time and put their personal lives and issues on the back burner from 9 to 5 everyday. Acknowledging your stress and regularly practicing de-stressing techniques helps to keep you positive and balanced.
Debrief with team	Particularly after a new or challenging interview experience, debriefing with team members can be supportive and informative for all involved.
Find a mentor or coworker with whom to problem-solve	There is probably no greater de-stress resource than a mentor or co-worker with whom you feel comfortable revealing your vulnerabilities or perceived shortcomings. What is important is that the person serving as the “sounding board” provides an honest assessment so that the meeting is constructive.
Talk with supervisor	If you trust your supervisor to be a good sounding board who cares about your well being and development, initiate a relationship where you can talk with him or her and create a plan to improve work related stress factors.
Take breaks	Breaks are put into the workday for a reason. Use them. Everybody needs time to clear his or her head and step back from the work for a few moments. Break time is a good time to take a walk, stretch, or have a casual conversation. Breaks should not be used to reflect on the work itself—although reflection time is appropriate within the human services work agenda.
Enjoy home and after-work activities	Social and recreational activities are important for getting recharged and putting your work life in perspective. Time spent with loved ones is similarly regenerative.

Modified from: Disability Program Navigator, Universal Customer Service in the One-Stop Career Centers (PowerPoint)
<http://www.dllr.state.md.us/employment/dpn/dpnsc/>

Topic 2:

STRENGTHS-BASED CUSTOMER SERVICE

“A profound belief in the [customer’s] potential is intrinsic to any strength-based assessment. Thinking about strengths begins with understanding what goals and dreams the person has; reflecting on the possibilities and hope in their lives. In the process, they can discover or develop new possibilities for themselves and change toward a better quality of life” (Saleebey, 2006).



ACKNOWLEDGING YOUR OWN STRENGTHS⁵

Strengths-based customer service is about discovering and acknowledging each person's strengths. To become adept at doing this with others, it's best to begin with yourself.



Take a moment to reflect on your day-to-day work responsibilities and activities and what personal qualities and skills you bring to bear in carrying them out.

1. What do you like best about your job at the One-Stop Center?

2. What personal qualities do you have that make you good at your job?

3. How do your strengths serve people?

A strengths-based approach operates on the assumption that people have strengths and resources for their own empowerment.⁶

The goal of the following section is to use your own strengths and passion for your work as a foundation for recognizing the strengths of customers and helping them leverage those strengths to achieve their goals.

⁵ Adapted from: Aguilar, L., & Stokes, L. (1996). *Multicultural customer service: Providing outstanding service across cultures*. Burr Ridge, IL: Irwin Professional.

⁶ (http://www.icvet.tafensw.edu.au/resources/strengths_based.htm)

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH TO CUSTOMER SERVICE

The following table describes the key attributes of the strengths-based approach to customer service. To help clarify what it means to practice each principle, the table includes a contrast with the traditional (often deficits-focused) approach. Use this table as a quick guide to assess whether an approach or practice is focused on customers' strengths or on their deficits.



Strengths-Based Principles		Traditional (often Deficit- Focused)
Focus on strengths	Every individual, group, family, and community has strengths. People learn from the challenges they endure as well as their accomplishments, and both become strengths.	Focus on the problems
Build a vision together	Genuine belief in a customer's potential allows a forward-looking perspective.	Manage the current crisis
Work in partnership	Open negotiation and recognition of the customer's insights, views, and aspirations creates a partnership.	Give customer 'assignments' without input
View the customer as a resource	All customers have valuable knowledge, skills, and abilities that come from a variety of different sources, including education, culture, and actual experience.	View the customer as synonymous with the problem
Believe in the customer	Believing in the customer is central to the Strengths Perspective. Optimism and hope are necessary in the process of transformation.	Blame challenges on the customer
Foster cooperation between the community and One-Stop Center	There are many assets and resources in the community that should be included in the assessment.	Do nothing to challenge competition among service providers
Identify the caring potential of all entities so that public resources can be focused on areas of greatest need	Every community is full of individuals, families, informal groups, associations, and institutions willing to help others. When given the opportunity, they contribute with assets and resources that others profoundly need, such as knowledge, company, special talents, time, and meeting places.	Rely on publicly funded organizations to provide services

Adapted from: "What's Different About Asset Building" Peter I. Benson, Uniting Communities for Youth Minneapolis, MN Search Institute, 1995. Saleebey, D. (2006). Principles of the Strengths Perspective and The Lexicon of the Strengths Perspective. In Strengths Institute, The University of Kansas, School of Social Welfare (2006). What is the Strengths Perspective? Retrieved on October 2010 from <http://www.socwel.ku.edu/strengths/about/index.shtml> Fast, B. and Chapin, R. (2002) The Strengths Model with Older Adults: Critical Practice Components in The Strengths Perspective in Social Work Practice. (3rd Ed.) Boston: Allyn & Bacon. Cowger, C.D. (1994). Assessing client strengths: Clinical assessment for client empowerment. *Social Work*, 39 (3) , 262-268. National Association for Social Workers, Inc.

COACHING CUSTOMERS TO SUCCESS



The tools and exercises on the pages that follow are designed to assist you in moving from a traditional (often deficit-focused) way of practice to strengths-based coaching.

What would happen if you focused on customers' strengths instead of on the barriers they face? A common pattern in workforce development is to identify barriers first. This is only natural, since barriers are often what make a customer eligible for a program or for intensive and training services. In order to concentrate on customer strengths, however, you need to reframe how you work with customers. The traditional approach fundamentally changes when you view yourself as a coach – someone working in partnership with customers from the time they walk in the door until they are on their career path. Seeing yourself as a coach encourages a collaborative approach in which you assist people with uncovering their own talents and strengths. A coach “stimulates the customer to uncover innate knowledge so they can achieve a sustainable result.”⁷

WHAT ARE THE ELEMENTS OF COACHING FOR SUCCESS?

We cover the first two components in this toolkit.

- ✓ **Readiness to Serve All Customers**
Welcome all customers who come through the door and continue to enhance your readiness to serve customers from a diverse array of backgrounds.
- ✓ **Strengths-Based Customer Approaches**
Assist people with uncovering their own talents and strengths to achieve sustainable results.
- ✓ **Career Pathways**
Build career pathways in partnership with the customer. Please visit the Career Pathways Initiative Resource Page for tools and background information:
<https://learnwork.workforce3one.org/>

Coaching for success is not a new model. Sports coaches, life coaches, and career coaches commonly use this model; their experiences and perspectives help us understand how coaching can be used in strengths-based customer service practice.

⁷ targetstudy.com

EXERCISE: Recognizing your Inherent Coaching Abilities⁸

1. Identify someone in your life who believed that you could succeed and thereby positively impacted your path in life.
2. How did this person coach you? How did he or she help you in identifying your strengths? Setting goals? Reaching your goals?
3. When have you been a coach or mentor to someone in your personal life? In your work life?
4. How can you use your experiences to better serve customers?

⁸ Adapted from: How to become a Coach (<http://targetstudy.com/professions/coach.html>)

AREAS OF STRENGTHS

You can use the following table as a tool to help you identify customers' strengths, especially for those who come from experiences of adversity. Almost anything can be considered a strength under certain conditions.

AREAS of STRENGTH	
What people have learned about themselves and others	People learn from the challenges they endure as well as from their accomplishments.
Personal qualities, traits, and virtues	When going through adversity, people may become aware of qualities and traits that they have always possessed but were not fully aware of, such as creativity, spiritual awareness, a sense of humor, caring, budgeting skills, and the ability to clarify goals and visions. In other cases, people develop new strengths and resources in order to meet their challenges.
What people know about the world around them	Knowledge comes from different sources, including education, culture, and actual experience. While learning about our world, we develop skills and abilities.
Talents	Frequently, you will find that people have surprising talents, such as singing, writing, painting, telling stories, and so on. Many times people do not even mention those talents because they do not seem relevant to employment. If talents are not considered when looking to identify strengths, the opportunity to identify skills and goals may be missed.
Cultural and personal stories and lore	Narratives, myths, and cultural stories can be a source of identity, meaning, and inspiration.
Pride	When people overcome obstacles, bouncing back from adversity, they develop a sense of pride and accomplishment.
Community connections	A customer's various connections to other people and to organizations in the community can be important strengths.
Spirituality	Spirituality can be described from a holistic approach as that which involves and transcends the biological, psychological, social, cultural, or political. (Canda 2006)

Saleebey, D. (2006). What are strengths?. In Strengths Institute, The University of Kansas, School of Social Welfare (2006). What is the Strengths Perspective? Retrieved October 2010 from <http://www.socwel.ku.edu/strengths/about/index.shtml>

STRENGTHS WHEEL⁹

The different kinds of strengths described in the table all contribute to making each individual his or her own best resource.



⁹ Modified from: <http://www.socwel.ku.edu/strengths/about/index.shtml> (Saleebey)

QUESTIONS FOR UNCOVERING STRENGTHS

When there is an opportunity to spend extended time with a customer, you can use the following questions to help uncover the customer's internal and external strengths. Frame your questions around the customer's current status, his or her desires and aspirations, and the resources he or she has used in the past. Use the **Initial Assessment Table** to organize the strengths you uncover.



1. What brings you here today? What do you want to accomplish while here?
2. What are your financial needs right now? How have you made ends meet in the past?
3. Who are people you can rely on? Who has made you feel understood, supported, or encouraged?
4. What do you want to accomplish in your life? What do you think is necessary to accomplish these things? How have you accomplished your goals in the past?
5. What activities are you involved in outside of work? What do you do for pleasure?

INITIAL ASSESSMENT TABLE

	CURRENT STATUS	DESIRES, ASPIRATIONS	RESOURCES USED IN THE PAST
Daily Living Situation			
Finances			
Health Insurance			
Vocational Experience			
Education			
Social Supports			
Health			
Leisure/Recreational Activities			
Spirituality/Culture Factors			
Supportive Services, Accommodations			
What are the customer's priorities?			
1.	2.	3.	4.

Tool adapted from: Kisthardt, W.E. (1992). A Strengths Model of Case Management: The Principles and Functions of a Helping Partnership with Persons with Persistent Mental Illness in *The Strengths Perspective in Social Work Practice*. Longman Publishing Group.

PRACTICE SCENARIOS

The following exercise lets you practice strengths-based approaches. Four different scenarios, each featuring a different hypothetical customer, are provided. For each scenario, complete the following steps.

STEP ONE – Identify Areas of Strengths: Read the customer scenario and identify areas of strengths using the [Strengths Wheel](#) (also feel free to identify other areas of strengths that come to mind). Think broadly about the customer’s strengths; include the person’s personal attributes as well as the resources available to him or her.

STEP TWO – Pose Strengths-Based Questions: After identifying general strengths, pose questions ([See Questions for Uncovering Strengths](#)) to deepen your understanding of the customer’s resources. It’s often helpful to first acknowledge a strength that you see and then ask a follow-up question. Example: “You were ambitious to obtain a sales assistant position straight out of high school. What types of things did you learn? How has that experience helped you in other positions?”

STEP THREE – Complete the Initial Assessment Table: Now that you have identified general strengths and posed questions to gain more knowledge about the customer’s aspirations and resources, fill in the [Initial Assessment Table](#).

Sample answers for all scenarios are provided at the end of this section.

SCENARIO ONE

Martha Fong is a sixty-year-old mother of three adults. She is seeking employment assistance in the wake of the lay-off of her forty-year-old daughter with whom she resides. The daughter has worked for a telecommunications company for the past fifteen years. The company merged and then downsized. The daughter was also recently widowed and has been very depressed. She is the mother of three children between the ages of two and ten years.

Ms. Fong has been at home caring for her three grandchildren for the past ten years. Two of the children attend school. Although caring for the children consumes most of her time, she volunteers at the local food bank every Wednesday evening with two friends from church. She also knits for pleasure and relaxation. Prior to becoming a grandmother, Ms. Fong worked at the local newspaper as a sales assistant, a job she obtained immediately after high school. The newspaper has since closed. Given her family’s current life circumstances, Ms. Fong feels that she needs to be doing more right now to assure that she does not become an additional burden to her daughter or her other two children, both of whom live out of state. Ms. Fong does not want to move; she is interested in working with young children and aspires to open a licensed childcare facility. Ms. Fong no longer drives because of limited vision.

SCENARIO TWO

Joseph Youngblood is a thirty-seven-year-old Native American male who is interested in obtaining training to drive the large trucks used for long-distance hauling. Mr. Youngblood grew up on Arizona. He is a high school graduate and a U.S. Army veteran. Upon completing high school, he enlisted in the Army and served one tour of duty without leaving the country. He did get to see some east coast and southern states. He completed his military service with an honorable discharge and returned to Arizona. He has worked steadily ever since in his family's mercantile business and has primary responsibility for purchasing and managing stock. Business has steadily declined over the past ten years due to both the overall economy and the opening of a Wal-Mart store nearby. He knows that it is time for him to make some changes and get some additional skills. While in the service he worked primarily in a medical supply unit. He thinks he might be interested in working in the health care field, but thinks that for his immediate needs, truck-driver training would be a faster route to a new career. In addition, he believes he would enjoy traveling across the country. He is married and has two boys, ages eight and ten. His home is located on a reservation and he has a large extended family, with several members living in the same neighborhood with him.

SCENARIO THREE

Susan Cooper is a single thirty-year-old woman with significant hearing loss. She is proficient in both sign language and lip reading. She has come to the One-Stop Center seeking assistance with her job search skills because she recently had two unsatisfactory and unsuccessful job interviews. She is accompanied by her cousin, her frequent companion, who is also proficient in sign language and has normal hearing.

Ms. Cooper has a BA degree in English Literature and an MA degree in Art History. Her career goal is to become an editor for a major publishing company. While attending college, Susan gained work experience as a library assistant. During her graduate training, she had an internship at an art gallery, where she organized exhibit functions. Her first and only full-time employment was as a food column editor for a local newspaper; she enjoyed this work, gaining indispensable skills in editing and knowledge about the publishing industry. But the newspaper was struggling financially and had to downsize, letting go special department editors such as Susan. She was laid off four years ago, following six years of employment. At the point when her unemployment benefits were ending, she decided to go to graduate school, utilizing scholarship funds and student loans for support. She just graduated and is seeking an editorial position that will truly be a career pathway opportunity.

SCENARIO FOUR

Juan Sanchez is a thirty-five-year-old migrant farm worker and father of three school-aged children who are eight, eleven and fourteen. He has been able to keep his family unit intact, although it has been difficult and they have struggled with sub-standard housing and a subsistent standard of living throughout his fifteen years of marriage. He probably could have made more money if he had been willing to leave his family for periods of time; however, he has great concern for their safety and refuses to be apart from them. He is currently vigilant about keeping his oldest child, a son, away from gang activity. He wants his children to have more opportunities than he has had. Mr. Sanchez has the equivalent of an eighth-grade education but is determined that his children at least finish high school. He has his oldest son with him at the One-Stop center, primarily because of the boy's proficiency in English and Spanish. Mr. Sanchez is wondering if there are any training programs available that will help him get permanent employment. He has heard that there are opportunities available in the building trades. Although he has never been formally trained, he has skills in plumbing and electrical wiring that he seems to have acquired out of necessity. He is a legal immigrant and this is his first experience with the One-Stop Center.

POSSIBLE ANSWERS FOR SCENARIO ONE – MARTHA FONG

Step One. Areas of strengths identified: Talents, community connections, pride, knowledge of the world around her, personal qualities, and spirituality.



Step Two. Strengths-based questions:

- You were ambitious to obtain a sales assistant position straight out of high school. Did you enjoy it? What types of things did you learn?
- Has your enjoyment of motherhood and being a grandparent led to your interest in working with young children?
- Giving of your time and talents to others is admirable. How did you get involved with the Food Bank? What skills have you learned while volunteering?
- Knitting can be very creative and also relaxing. What do you like most about it?
- Are you guided by any religion or cultural issues that I need to understand?

Step Three. Completed Initial Assessment Table:

SAMPLE INITIAL ASSESSMENT TABLE FOR MARTHA FONG

	CURRENT STATUS	DESIRES, ASPIRATIONS	RESOURCES USED IN THE PAST
Daily Living Situation	Living with daughter and three grandchildren in a rented apartment. Takes care of grandchildren. Tends flower garden. Enjoys cooking for family.	Needs a steady income to contribute to household income. Would like to stay in current apartment, as it is large and has a garden.	Until widowed, lived with partner. Lived for one year with sister before moving in with daughter. The father of the grandchildren is not involved in their lives.
Finances	Daughter, the primary wage earner, was laid off from her job. Provides babysitting for two neighbor children five days a week (in addition to taking care of her grandchildren). Using food bank. Worried about losing apartment if she and daughter do not find jobs.	More stability, fulltime employment.	Daughter has provided for family for the last 10 years. Daughter receives inconsistent child support from her children's father. Prior to that, customer primarily relied on her partner's wages. Has brought in extra money by providing babysitting for 20 years.
Health Insurance	Using COBRA to extend health insurance for the family. Has resources to pay for 3 more months.	Full medical, dental, and vision insurance for her whole family.	Daughter's insurance. Partner's insurance.

	CURRENT STATUS	DESIRES, ASPIRATIONS	RESOURCES USED IN THE PAST
Vocational Experience	Unemployed. Provides babysitting for two neighbor children.	Skills to own and operate a day care center in her home.	Babysitting for neighbors. Sales Assistant for now-defunct newspaper. Good with people, humanitarian, volunteer.
Education	Has high school diploma.	Training and license to open day care facility.	Volunteer work with children and adults at the local community center and food bank.
Social Supports	Family, including two sisters, two nieces, one nephew; friend from church; food bank volunteer coordinator.	Not sure of options at this time.	Women's support group through church, pastor.
Health	Stress, loss of sleep, weight loss, stomach pains.	Support with stress; explanation of stomach pains; to feel better, to have more rest.	Used to meditate.
Leisure/Recreational Activities	Too tired and upset to socialize beyond volunteer obligation.	To re-engage with friends, build more friendships, read more, participate in a walking group.	Knitting, walking, going to the park with grandchildren.
Spirituality/Culture Factors	Not feeling connected at this time.	Wants stronger family bond with daughter, nightly meals together; want to be healthy physically and mentally.	Community work through church, loves to garden and connect with earth.
Supportive Services, Accommodations	Does not drive, concerned about working outside of the home because of limited vision but needs income and loves working with children	Transportation; access to resources for people with reduced vision	Drove herself, depended on daughter for transportation, stayed home with grandchildren
What are the customer's priorities?			
1. Finding employment 2. Stability 3. Getting licensed to provide day care in her home			

POSSIBLE ANSWERS FOR SCENARIO TWO – JOSEPH YOUNGBLOOD

Step One: Strengths Areas Identified: Community, Pride, What people have learned about themselves and others, What people know about the world around them, Personal qualities, Traits and virtues, and Talents.

Step Two: Pose Strengths-Based Questions:

- What did you like about school?
- What were your strongest subjects?
- What activities did you enjoy outside of class requirements?
- Were there any particular challenges that you experienced in your efforts to obtain your high school diploma?
- What did you like most about your experiences in the military?
- Did the military present any particular, unusual, or unexpected challenges for you?
- What do you consider the most positive aspects of your large and close family?
- Are there any particular family challenges that you want to talk about or think I need to know?
- Is your wife a stay at home Mom or does she also have a career outside the home?
- Do you feel she is satisfied at the present time?
- It appears that you have some major responsibilities at the family store. How will they manage in your absence?
- Have your wife and children ever experienced your absence from home for several days at a time?
- Do you think there are any adjustments that need to be addressed as you make this career change?

Step Three. Completed Initial Assessment Table:

Sample Initial Assessment Table for Joseph Youngblood

	CURRENT STATUS	DESIRES, ASPIRATIONS	RESOURCES USED IN THE PAST
Daily Living Situation	Lives on a reservation with family and extended family close by	Comfortable with living situation	High School Diploma; reliance on established systems; planning and perseverance.
Finances	Decline in income due to business income decline	Permanent employment in health care and immediate employment in long distance hauling	Family mercantile business; steady income
Health Insurance	Veteran benefits	Employment health insurance	Military benefits
Vocational Experience	Skills in inventory, military (medical supply unit)	Develop more skills in health care and long distance hauling	Military and family business, purchasing, some familiarity with other parts of the country
Education	High School Diploma	Obtain a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) with certification on 18 wheelers.	Military training; retail training and experience
Social Supports	Immediate and Extended family, Reservation Community	Continuation of positive supports	Family, high-school faculty and friends, military unit
Health	No current health concerns	Health education specific to his age and cultural realities	Military health records
Leisure/Recreational Activities	Being with children and family	Travel, expand family awareness of other parts of the country/diversity	Family and community activities; Hiking; physical fitness activities
Spirituality/Culture Factors	Family attends church with regularity; emphasis is on the children's development.	Faith community as a source of companionship and	Culturally based spirituality

	CURRENT STATUS	DESIRES, ASPIRATIONS	RESOURCES USED IN THE PAST
		support	
Supportive Services, Accommodations	Veteran Benefits	Family and supplemental health care benefits	Family and military benefits
What are the customer's priorities? 1. Truck Driving Training 2. Increase Income 3. Training in Health Care			

POSSIBLE ANSWERS FOR SCENARIO THREE – SUSAN COOPER

Step One: Identify Strengths Areas: Community, Pride, Talent, What people know about the world around them, and Personal qualities.

Step Two: Pose Strengths-Based Questions:

- You are clearly well prepared for your career interests. Can you give me an accurate and complete description of your job search efforts thus far?
- Often we experience what might be described as a good job interview without getting the position. Have you had that experience? Can you describe the aspects of that interview that you enjoyed?
- Are there specific aspects of that interview that you feel you need some help mastering?
- Would you be interested and able to participate in a small job search group with others who want to strengthen their skills?
- What would you need us to do or provide in order for a job search group to work for you?

Step Three. Completed Initial Assessment Table:

Sample Initial Assessment Table for Susan Cooper

	CURRENT STATUS	DESIRES, ASPIRATIONS	RESOURCES USED IN THE PAST
Daily Living Situation	Shares an apartment with her cousin who is full-timed employed as an administrative assistant to the Director of a community-based health clinic	Stability and independence	Internships, employment, and student grants and loans
Finances	Qualifies for some disability insurance but needs employment to meet expenses.	Wants to work full-time as an editor.	Employed editor, graduate school scholarships/fellowships/loans.
Health Insurance	Medicaid	Employment Sponsored Health Insurance	Medicaid and Employment Sponsored Health Insurance
Vocational Experience	Fully trained for area of desired employment in an editorial position	Interview practice and feedback. Resume Review and portfolio development. Job leads. Job Search	Successful editing position. Returned to higher education for more skills to assure upward mobility

	CURRENT STATUS	DESIRES, ASPIRATIONS	RESOURCES USED IN THE PAST
		Group	
Education	Masters Degree	To find a position commensurate with her education and experience. On-going professional training.	Internship and employment for practical experience. Utilized further education ops when laid off.
Social Supports	Cousin, friends	Happy with support system	Friends and family
Health	Good	Continued good health	General health always good
Leisure/Recreational Activities	Art, Reading, Hiking	Would like to travel both within and outside of the USA	Active in intra-mural sports when in school
Spirituality/Culture Factors	Not an active church goer, but a high level of spirituality	No specific aspirations at this time	Active in church throughout her youth. Lapsed in recent years
Supportive Services, Accommodations	Is well informed regarding resources and supportive tools for people with hearing deficits. Highly Skilled	Job environment that will not discriminate against her hearing loss	Positive experiences in the past but hard to get a job once unemployed
What are the customer's priorities?			
1. Letters of reference as supplement for job interviews		2. Interview and Resume Workshops	

POSSIBLE ANSWERS FOR SCENARIO FOUR – JUAN SANCHEZ

Step One: Identify Strengths Areas: Pride, the Community, Talents, Personal Qualities, and What people know about the world around them.

Step Two: Pose Strengths-Based Questions:

- I am so glad that you came in to the Center today and I am sure that we can assist you in finding more stable employment. Can you tell me what you know or think about the building industry and why you think you would enjoy working within it?
- Tell me more about your experiences using your plumbing and electrical wiring skills.
- Have you had any experiences with training programs since you left school? If so, please tell me about what you have done and what you liked and/or disliked about it?
- You are obviously a devoted husband and father. What has kept you forging ahead during the roughest times in your life?
- If a training position required you to have a higher level of English reading and writing skills, would you be interested in attending classes for that purpose?
- Have you ever attended ESL classes? If the answer is yes, Do you think the classes were really good, just okay, or not very helpful? Did the teacher provide a comfortable learning atmosphere?
- Sometimes in the midst of training, no matter how hard we are trying, we need assistance. Who would you turn to if this happened to you?
- Tell me a little about your family and your dreams for your children? Do you happen to have any pictures of your wife and children with you that you are willing to share?
- Do your children like school and how are they doing in their classes?
- Since you have your son here with you today, would the two of you also like to talk about opportunities we might have for him in exploring future career and educational opportunities?

Step Three. Completed Initial Assessment Table:

Sample Initial Assessment Table for Juan Sanchez

	CURRENT STATUS	DESIRES, ASPIRATIONS	RESOURCES USED IN THE PAST
Daily Living Situation	Substandard housing	Stability for family, kids. Quality housing	Self-reliance and a belief that situations can improve
Finances	Struggling to make ends meet	Stable job and enough income to support family and provide for his children	Seasonal farm work and occasional odd jobs (lawn work, minor house repairs, painter’s asst., etc.)

CHECKLIST FOR STRENGTHS-BASED PRACTICE

Here is a list of quick reminders of what it takes to provide strengths-based customer service to all customers you serve.



- ✓ Discover what the customer wants. Know his or her aspirations, goals, and dreams.
- ✓ Enjoy and appreciate differences among individuals and customer groups.
- ✓ Provide customer service in meaningful ways.
- ✓ Acknowledge the strengths of all customers.
- ✓ Practice self-care.
- ✓ See customers as their own best resources.
- ✓ Approach work with customers as a coach (see yourself as an informational resource, trainer, trouble-shooter, mentor, and advocate).
- ✓ Acknowledge the strengths and resources you bring to your work, as well as the strengths and resources your customers possess.¹⁰

¹⁰ Adapted from: Aguilar, L., & Stokes, L. (1996). *Multicultural customer service: Providing outstanding service across cultures*. Burr Ridge, IL: Irwin Professional. Saleebey, D. (Ed.). (2006). *The Strengths Perspective in social work practice* (4th Ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

ADDITIONAL TOOLS and RESOURCES



EXAMPLES OF SERVICE DELIVERY METHODS

New York State: Enhancing the Service Delivery System for People with DisAbilities



New York State's (NYS) newly developed Work Incentives Information Network (WIIN) was designed for an overall impact on customers, practitioners, the workforce development system, and partner organizations. Through WIIN, NYS aims to improve service delivery for people with disabilities by enhancing the planning and assistance services for workforce practitioners. Some key goals of WIIN are to:

- Develop a minimum of 100 new credentialed benefits and work incentives practitioners a year to provide a comprehensive array of services and supports for wage based and self-employed workers;
- Equip a cadre of 500 existing employment supports and rehabilitation practitioners each year throughout NYS to be able to provide short-term assistance, information, and referral to credentialed practitioners;
- Develop a minimum set of standards and competencies for quality assurance; and
- Support asset development and accumulation for people with disabilities.

To meet these goals, NYS offers a range of technical assistance services and supports to practitioners through the New York Makes Work Pay Initiative¹¹, including:

- **Certificate Programs in Benefits and Work Incentives Planning and Assistance** which requires participation in a five-day on-site training and successful completion of a rigorous field assignment/evaluation;
- **Work Incentive Information Network Seminars** which are two-day sessions offered regionally throughout NYS, to provide staff with a comprehensive introduction and review of all components needed to fulfill WIIN obligations and to become fully acquainted with the Social Security Administration's disability programs and related work incentives;

¹¹ The New York Makes Work Pay Initiative is a collaborative effort of the New York State Office of Mental Health, the Burton Blatt Institute at Syracuse University and the Employment and Disability Institute at Cornell University. The goal of the initiative is to improve the rate of employment among people with disabilities.

- **Supplemental Distance Learning Training** events that allow WIIN practitioners to remain current in promising field practices and become acquainted with new and various topics important to a return to work effort.
- **Toll-Free Technical Assistance Hotline** for WIIN practitioners who have questions when working with beneficiaries who are interested in work; and
- **Organization Development Support and Online Organizational Assessment Tools** that assess the quality and fidelity of services and supports offered, leading to the development of a strategic work plan to enhance services.

In an effort to align these training and technical assistance services and supports to service delivery, NYS has developed a three-tier service delivery system of practitioner expertise and skills. The primary purposes of this three-tier system are to (1) assist practitioners in understanding the scope of services and supports they provide to New Yorkers with disabilities and where they plug into the hierarchy of services, (2) catalogue these services to provide a comprehensive directory for consumers of where services can be obtained, and (3) ensure that practitioners at each level are provided with access to ongoing technical assistance and training customized to meet their needs.

The three tiers of practitioners available for services to customers with disabilities in NYS are:

- **Level I: Comprehensive and Long-Term Benefits of Work Incentives Planning and Assistance.** At this level of service delivery, practitioners are credentialed through a rigorous nationally recognized course of study inclusive of a minimum of 20 hours of practicum experience with an examination of proficiency/competency. Typically, staff at this level spend more than 35 percent of their time in direct service to customers.
- **Level II: Basic and Short-Term Benefits Planning Services and Supports.** At this level of service delivery, practitioners are required to complete two days of training on disability benefits and work incentives with annual refresher training. Typically, 16 to 35 percent of staff time is spent in direct service to customers.
- **Level III: General Benefits and Work Incentives Information and Referral.** At this service delivery level, practitioners typically spend less than 15 percent of their time providing direct service to customers with disabilities. They are encouraged to attend distance-learning events on work incentive issues, financial literacy, and asset accumulation so that they can make accurate referrals to Level I and II practitioners.

In short, NYS has developed promising practices in three categories, including (1) staff development, (2) collaboration, and (3) the strength of their State/front-line connection. In addition to the value-added qualities of these efforts independently, the collective impact of these practices create a synergetic quality to the services. Thus, across NYS, there is a continual

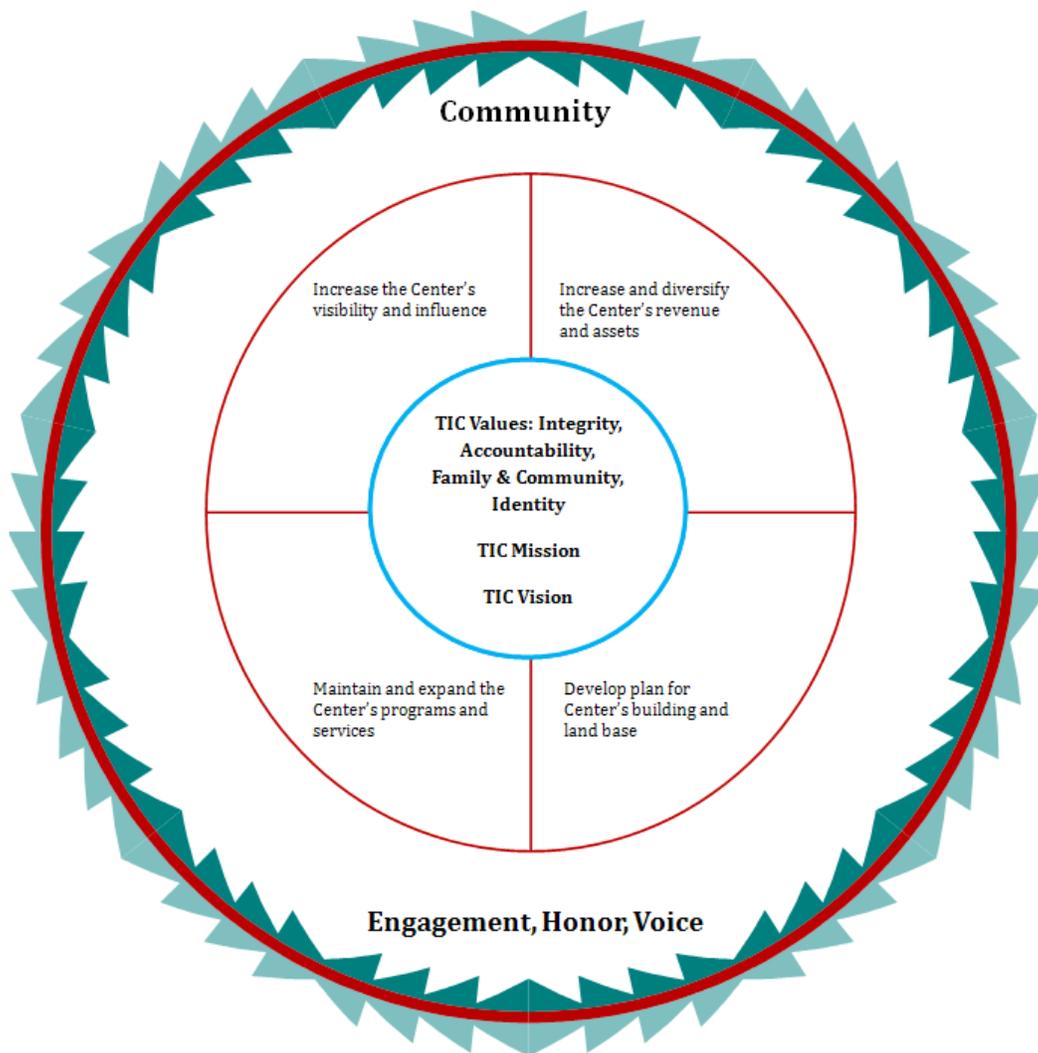
focus upon what and how workforce development professionals should deliver services.
Customer centered services are not just a cliché.

Tucson Indian Center: Turning a Concrete Plan into Reality

The Tucson Indian Center builds their entire program, including customer services and administrative practices, around their strategic plan, the Declaration of Identity. As illustrated below in Exhibit 1, it is clear that the Tucson Indian Center is operating under the principles of a high performance work organization and that they believe in putting the words of their plan into action at all levels of their system. Staff members expressed that the Declaration of Identity, which incorporates their core values, their vision and mission statements, speaks to their strength-based approach to service provision.



Exhibit 1: The Declaration of Identity



For instance, a hallmark of the Tucson Indian Center's direct service approach is the use of "Talking Circles" as an on-going response to community needs, including employment, education/training, and emergency assistance and overall health and wellness issues (e.g., substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, etc.). Talking Circles are a cultural tradition and are issue-focused

and organized by gender. Traditionally, talking circles were used to solve tribal concerns and to insure the full participation of all concerned. A tribal member could talk about “whatever they wanted for as long as they wanted.” Within the modern day Talking Circle discussions, staff members provide input on traditional native practices regarding the issue at hand. Emphasis is on “planting seeds” for change and difference but avoiding “in your face” responses to various concerns, such as domestic violence and parenting. Groups are typically six to eight weeks in duration and are identified by tribal significant names, such as White Bison, which helps to avoid stigmatization.

The Tucson Indian Center has been successful in creating a welcoming environment for the Indian and Native American population. According to Center staff, the welcoming atmosphere has been described by community members as “so prevalent, you can feel it.” Staff members explained that they are intentional about spending resources to determine their effectiveness within the community. They therefore conduct needs assessments, administer surveys, and utilize the expertise of a public relations agency to better connect with the populations and communities they serve. The Center is designed to be a place where people can come to be comfortable, rest and relax. Extensive thought was given even to the pictures they have on the walls, in an effort to create an atmosphere where people can feel comfortable with being themselves. Participant feedback has told them that the “Center feels like home.” The Tucson Indian Center has gained the reputation of being “a good place to go for help.”

In addition to integrating the Declaration of Identity at the service delivery level, the Tucson Indian Center has also made a deliberate effort to integrate their core values within their administrative functions. This integration can be identified through the format of monthly meetings of every department inclusive of individual meetings between individual staff and supervisors. At these meetings, they review the five questions of Stephen Covey’s, *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. How is it going? What am I learning? Are my goals being met? How am I doing as a Supervisor? How am I doing as a helper? This process is replicated monthly by the management team with the Executive Director. In addition, there are annual departmental retreats along with an annual organizational retreat, all emphasizing the identification of areas which need improvement, as well as the celebration of successes. One staff member expressed:

“This is the first place where I have really felt valued, listened too, and where my suggestions and ideas are incorporated. It is an opportunity to really make a difference in our community, to really make a difference to the clients and families we work with.”

Coordinating with other organizations such as the Pima County One-Stop Career Center and the Urban League has increased the credibility of the Tucson Indian Center. Through their combined efforts to provide training dollars, co-enroll program participants, and collaborate on community programs and events, they have been able to leverage resources and provide opportunities that neither of the organizations could provide independently. In addition,

because the U.S. Department of Labor has specific funds and programs for the Indian and Native American populations, a strong connection between One-Stop Centers and Indian Centers is essential to meeting service mandates. The Pima County One-Stop Center and the Tucson Indian Center have established that important partnership.

In summary, the Tucson Indian Center's Declaration of Identity has served as a key guide to their collaborative service delivery approach and their administrative functions. It is expected that staff integrate the Declaration of Identity into their individual service approach, and that the Declaration of Identity is visible within the overall operating procedures of the organization. In addition, staff members attribute their credibility within the community to the fact that they are "trustworthy and have the intent, integrity and honesty to really want to genuinely help [their] native people."

Agency for Workforce Innovation: Engaging Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers

In the State of Florida, the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI) assists Workforce Boards in operating an outreach and employment program for Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFWs). In accordance with federal regulation, all States are required to provide MSFWs with services that are both “qualitatively equivalent and quantitatively proportionate” to the services provided to other jobseekers. One-Stop Career Centers where 10 percent or more of the job seeker population are MSFWs are therefore required to have an MSFW Outreach Worker on staff.



Since Florida is one of the top five “Significant MSFW States”, they require full-time, year round MSFW Outreach Workers. According to the AWI Senior Monitor Advocate, Florida has placed 10 MSFW Outreach Workers at nine “Significant One-Stop Career Centers” throughout their 24 workforce regions, who are required to conduct field outreach at least 80 percent of the time, with a minimum of five “quality MSFW contacts”¹² per day. Florida’s Significant One-Stop Centers are strategically located where agricultural activity exists, in which MSFW Outreach Workers explain to MSFWs at their working, living, or gathering areas, the services available through the One-Stop Center, including:

- Information on types of jobs available
- Assistance with registration
- Testing, counseling, and training opportunities
- Job referrals, job development, and referrals to supportive services
- Information about other organizations serving MSFWs
- Complaint resolution and
- Information about farmworker rights that are protected by state federal laws.

To ensure that the MSFW Outreach Workers are able to engage and build trusting relationships with the MSFW population, AWI requires their MSFW Outreach Workers be bilingual or multilingual, have MSFW experience and/or be from a minority group representative of MSFWs in the service area. In addition to these requirements, AWI:

- Developed trilingual MSFW outreach tools (English, Spanish, and Creole) to assist MSFW Outreach Workers in connecting with all MSFW populations;

¹² In Florida, “a quality MSFW contact” means an applicant was contacted in the field, an application was taken and a social security number was available to verify services provided to the MSFW.

- Convene MSFW Outreach Workers quarterly to share best practices and to provide updates and clarifications on regulations and procedures; and
- Developed online training presentations that include voice-over narration and short quizzes to allow MSFWs to “learn about essential workforce concepts while also being exposed to the latest workforce topics.”¹³

To support training efforts, Regional Monitor Advocates provide on-site technical assistance to each Outreach Worker during quality assurance visits. Monitor Advocates spend at least half a day during each technical assistance visit in the farmworker community, providing technical assistance to the Outreach Worker as he or she performs his or her duties. In addition, Regional Monitor Advocates will also visit employers to help maintain on-going liaisons with MSFW Outreach Workers, advocacy groups, and other employers.

Overall, through these practices and more, AWI has achieved positive outcomes through their MSFW Outreach Program. Success in the delivery of quality services to MSFWs is attributed to the employment of qualified bilingual and multilingual individuals with MSFW backgrounds. In addition, requiring all MSFW Outreach Workers to be in the field at least 80 percent of the time has assisted them in remaining visible in the farmworker communities, which has increased the MSFW population’s comfort-level and willingness to work with them.

¹³ http://www.floridajobs.org/workforce/training_pres.html

New York State: Creating Customer-Centered, Heart and Soul Experiences

In New York State, where training has already been noted as a priority within their service development efforts, the Career Counseling and Advisory Academy offers One-Stop Career Center staff training in Head, Heart and Soul (HHS) interviewing techniques. HHS is a training curriculum developed by Dr. Cal Crow of the Center for Learning Connections. Dr. Crow emphasizes that in their efforts to assist customers, workforce development professionals customarily invoke the Head (cognitive awareness), such as teaching, telling, explaining, and providing information, while overlooking the customers Heart and Soul (i.e., feelings and value system).



HHS training therefore teaches frontline workers how to engage customers in conversations that encourage them to express “heart” and “soul” responses to career development interests and to balance them with their cognitive responses. For instance, as a customer describes important events and situations, the frontline worker is to look for any type of emotional expression. When an emotional expression has been identified, the frontline worker may ask, “How do you feel when you are involved in that activity?” or “How were you feeling when you did that?” Thus, the purpose of HHS is to engage people in conversations about things that are important to them, creating a customer-centered, heart and soul experience.

One frontline worker that has received and implemented the HHS training reflected on the usefulness of this approach by stating:

I have a customer with whom I have used Head, Heart and Soul questions with and the results have been amazing. In my opinion, once you get to that key question or series of questions that truly tap into how they are feeling, they will connect with you and be more ready, willing, and able to get that next employment opportunity than ever before. They feel better about themselves, others, and their situation.

In summary, the above comment clearly endorses the use of this approach as an effective tool in helping people get in touch with their emotions about work and job-seeking. This strengths-based approach provides both the worker and the customer with additional information to consider in developing their strategy for success. Additionally, it allows people to use their feelings as motivators for success, as opposed to unconscious barriers.

Mature Services, Inc.: Embedding Older Workers in One-Stop Career Centers

Founded in Akron, Ohio as a senior citizen program, Mature Services, Inc., a contracted One-Stop Career Center provider, “promotes successful aging by providing the highest quality programs and services to support, strengthen, and empower adults as they age.” A hallmark of their service delivery model is the Senior Employment Center (SEC), which operates throughout 42 counties within the state of Ohio. Through the SEC, mature job-seekers receive detailed assessments and an employment plan that provide them with the necessary tools to achieve their career goals.



An essential component of the SEC is the Senior Community Service Employment (SCSEP) program. The SCSEP provides part-time paid work-based training for low-income individuals age 55 plus at non-profit and governmental agencies. Program participants work an average of 20 hours per week, upgrading their skills and gaining practical experience while providing valuable support services to community agencies. One-Stop Career Centers throughout the state serve as placement sites for many SCSEP participants, in which the SCSEP has enhanced the capacity of One-Stop Career Centers to serve mature job seekers.

According to Vice President for Workforce Development at Mature Services, Inc., roughly three to four SCSEP workers are assigned to various One-Stop Career Centers throughout the state for a period of six to nine months. These workers support the One-Stops and job seekers by:

- staffing the front desk and resource room;
- conducting basic skills and career pathway assessments; and
- providing peer counseling and job search assistance.

Among these responsibilities, SCSEP workers play a huge role in managing the “Job Search Cooperative Program,” which is an extension of the Job Club¹⁴ that is offered by the One-Stop Career Centers. It has been reported that placing SCSEP workers at One-Stop Career Centers has allowed One-Stops to provide specialized services to mature job seekers. As a result, they have been able to better engage mature job seekers in One-Stop services, identify their needs and skills, and provide intensive and ongoing job search support. In many ways, SCSEP workers are viewed as peer job coaches to job seekers and informal mentors to frontline staff members

¹⁴ Job Clubs consist of a series of classes on job seeking skills covering topics such as goal setting, resume development, interviewing, networking, cold calling, and targeting unadvertised jobs.

and they have assisted in creating a welcoming environment for mature job seekers at One-Stop Career Centers.

While SCSEP workers often come to the program with many skills, Mature Services, Inc. provides them with training to assist them with providing quality customer service. Many SCSEP workers are required to participate in a four-week classroom training that includes a general overview of the customer service field. The custom designed curriculum includes the basic rules of good services, including “8 Critical Customer Service Skills,” “7 Mental Blocks to Successful Complaint Handling,” Tough Request: Say No With ‘I Can’,” and “How to Rate Your Job Stress Vulnerability.” An instructor teaches these skills through videos and in-class training materials, and participants are given opportunities for practical applications.

In summary, SCSEP workers have become embedded within the One-Stop system throughout the state of Ohio. Through informal mentoring, SCSEP workers have enhanced frontline staff members knowledge and skills of how to effectively serve mature job seekers, and have also been integral in assessing mature job seekers needs and skill levels, which has assisted frontline staff members in identifying goals for each job seekers’ individual service plan. SCSEP workers thus add great value to One-Stop Career Centers, ensuring that no mature job seekers needs go unmet.

Iowa State: Collaboration Makes a Difference

Iowa's Integrated Services Model is currently the touchstone of their state's service delivery policies. Using funds from their Work Incentive grant, seven state agencies joined forces about ten years ago, to create a multi-agency governance council that aims to provide quality and seamless services to customers of state programs.¹⁵



Through various data collection methods, the council found that customer service was the key issue in service delivery, whereas they had previously focused on accessibility as the main hindrance for some customers, particularly people with disabilities. Over time, the council has addressed issues of sharing customers, information, and resources, and ultimately developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that articulates flexibility and encourages service integration across multiple agencies and programs. Throughout this process, the council has come to better understand that collaboration makes a difference in the success of programs and customers' experiences. For example, Iowa's success with the Disability Navigator Program stemmed from the realization that the Navigator was a resource to all seven agencies, not just to Workforce Development.

The Department of Workforce Development is now in the process of re-designing their One-Stop Career Centers to be service focused rather than program focused. Previously they thought that customers preferred self-services and centers were also designed around specified programs (e.g., veterans, post-secondary education, older worker services, etc.). However, after web-based services were offered, they realized that customers visit centers for specific reasons. Therefore, frontline staff members are now being prepared to answer questions about all programs and services available at One-Stop Career Centers, engage the customer in these services, and make appropriate referrals.

In essence, every person who visits a One-Stop Career Center is considered a future customer and is assisted by a staff member. Frontline workers make "no attempt to get a person away from the reception desk so that they can serve the next person in line." Hence, training frontline workers on how to greet customers with a handshake and a smile support the change in the dynamics of the One-Stop Career Center atmosphere into a customer service environment.

¹⁵ These seven agencies include the Departments of Rehabilitative Services Administration, Education, Human Services, Vocational Rehabilitation, Workforce Development, the Department for the Blind, and the Disabilities Council.

California EDD: Devoting Time for Staff Development



In California, the Employment Development Department (EDD) is the fiscal agent and administrator of the Disability Navigator Program. Through this program, local-level Disability Program Navigators (DPN) “guide One-Stop Career Center staff in assisting people with disabilities to access and navigate the various programs that impact their ability to gain/retain employment.” In an effort to provide ongoing training and support to DPNs, the state director works closely with the local DPNs to organize quarterly convenings. Workforce Investment Board (WIB) directors, One-Stop Career Center directors, and other state and local staff members responsible for overseeing, coordinating, and delivering services to people with disabilities also participate in these quarterly convenings. At a minimum, the convenings last a day and a half, and feature training, networking, and tool- and technique-sharing opportunities that include the following:

- **Workshops** that expand the knowledge and skills of DPNs and One-Stop staff by focusing on areas such as “Are You Healthy Enough to Serve?” and “I’m A DPN- Now What?” as well as providing online resources such as the 30 Second Training¹⁶;
- **Subject-matter expert and state and local partner presentations** that focus on targeted topics and/or populations, such as “Creating a Supportive infrastructure for people with disabilities” and “Prisoner Reentry into the Workforce: Using the Second Chance Curriculum”; and
- **Opportunities for DPNs to share best practices** they are using that have been effective in building the capacity of One-Stop Career Center staff members to effectively serve people with disabilities.

To ensure that the quarterly convenings are relevant and meet the needs of DPNs and other state-level and local-level participants, the state director requests that all DPNs complete a one-page evaluation that gathers feedback about the convening, as well as recommendations for training topics and presenters. In addition, DPNs are actively involved in the planning and coordination of the quarterly convenings, assuming responsibility for identifying subject matter experts and local partners who can provide targeted training services.

Overall, the quarterly convenings have been effective in bridging communication gaps and developing a network among state-level and local-level staff members and partners. In addition, the DPNs are taking what they learn at the state quarterly meetings and tweaking it to fit the needs of their areas, which has aided in building the capacity of One-Stop staff members throughout the state to serve individuals with disabilities. California has also developed a

¹⁶ [The 30 Second Training](#)

statewide DPNs mentorship program in which new DPNs are paired with seasoned DPNs and those seeking expertise in a substantive area are paired with expert DPNs.

DESKTOP TOOL

Menu of Services

Resource Room Services

Service	Contact Person Information

On-Site Partner Services

Service	Contact Person Information

On-Site Community Resources

Service	Contact Person Information

Off-Site Partner Services

Service	Contact Person Information

Off-Site Community Resources

Service	Contact Person Information

Online Services

Service	Contact Person Information

FOCUSING ON STRENGTHS BY ENGAGING HEART AND SOUL

Begin by asking your customer to describe something positive in his or her life. When he or she mentions something, ask¹⁷

“What is there about _____ that makes it special?”

After he or she responds, say

“That sounds interesting. Could you say more about that?” “Could you elaborate on that a bit?”

The purpose is to engage people in conversations about things that are important to *them*. As they describe important events and situations, look for any type of emotional expression.

When you notice this, ask

“And how do you feel when you are involved in that activity?” or “And how were you feeling when you did that?” or “What kinds of feelings are you having now as you talk about that positive experience?”

These are “heart” questions. As your customer becomes engaged at the “heart” level, look for opportunities to take the conversation to the level of meaning and values, which we might call the “soul” level. For example, if a customer says, “I feel like I am helping the community when I volunteer.” You can ask

“And what does it mean to you when you know you have helped the community? or “How important is it for you to know that you are helping the community?”

These are “soul” questions that can provide valuable information for future conversations and actions.

Operating solely from the “head” does not produce change.

NOTE: Steer clear of questions that start with “Why...?” Stay away from statements that begin with “But...”

¹⁷ Adapted from Cal Crow, Ph.D., Center for Learning Connections

STRENGTHS AND GOALS SELF-ASSESSMENT (FOR CUSTOMERS)

Write your strengths and goals in the columns below. This is not a one-time activity but one you can revisit as you gain new strengths and reach your goals. This exercise can be used when you are seeking employment or looking to change other areas of your life.

<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <p>What do you do well? What do people like about you? When are you most fulfilled?</p>	<p><u>Goals</u></p> <p>What are your dreams? What support or training do you need to realize your goals? What steps can you take to reach your goals?</p>
<p>What new skills have you gained?</p>	<p>What goals have you reached? What new goals do you have?</p>

RESOURCES

1. [Opening Doors for Everyone Resource Page](#)
Website
Offers resources related to this *Opening Doors for Everyone* toolkit. Watch recorded webinars and download resources to enhance your readiness to serve all One-Stop customers and learn about strengths-based approaches to customer service.
2. [Career Pathways Initiative](#)
Website
Access to resources related to the Career Pathways Initiative. Career pathways have been described as "a series of connected education and training programs and support services that enable individuals to secure employment within a specific industry or occupational sector, and to advance over time to successively higher levels of education and employment in that sector."
3. [Disability Awareness and Inclusive Communication](#)
PDF
The document provides a list of unbiased and inclusive terms and explains why some terms are outdated or offensive; it includes the Ten Commandments of Communicating with People with Disabilities and other resources.
4. [At Your Service: Welcoming Customers with Disabilities](#)
Free online tutorial
The course includes core concepts and case studies. The first half explores various core concepts, such as Disability Etiquette and explains the provisions of the Workforce Investment Act and Americans with Disabilities Act. The second half provides individual case studies that offer the opportunity to apply what is learned in the first half of the course.
5. [Cultural Competency](#)
Webpage
Lists five essential elements that assist with becoming a more culturally competent system, institution, or agency. Cultural competence is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system or agency and enable that system or agency to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.
6. [NAWDP's 10 Core Competencies](#)
Website (with link to the Core CWDP Competencies word document)
Describes the ten core competencies defined by The National Association of Workforce Development Professionals as necessary for calling oneself a "Workforce Development Professional."
7. [Access for All](#)
Resource Manual

The comprehensive manual is designed to assist One-Stop Systems in meeting the needs of individuals with disabilities.

8. [Toolkit for Frontline Services for Youth](#)

PDF

The toolkit is designed to enhance the quality of youth services, and is useful to all professionals assisting youth in developing the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in a demand-driven economy.

9. [Culture Card](#)

Desktop Guide

This easy-to-use guide builds cultural awareness of American Indians and Alaska Natives. It includes myths and facts, regional and cultural differences, cultural customs, cultural identity, strengths, and self-awareness and etiquette tips.

10. [LEP Self-Assessment Tool](#) and [Worksheet](#)

Self-Assessment and Planning Tool

The tools are intended for use by Federal recipients in conducting a self-assessment of their progress in providing language assistance to LEP persons and developing a Language Assistance Plan (LAP) for LEP beneficiaries or potential beneficiaries.

11. [Universal Customer Service in the One-Stop Career Center](#)

Online Training

The training provides tips on providing excellent customer service to all customers.

12. Multicultural Customer Service

Book

Enhances understanding of culture so that frontline staff members can better serve customers from a variety of cultures. There are exercises and scenarios that allow you to personalize the concepts by applying them to your job. Used with permission by: Aguilar, L., & Stokes, L. (1996). *Multicultural customer service: Providing outstanding service across cultures*. Burr Ridge, IL: Irwin Professional.

13. [The Diversity Center](#)

Webpage

Leslie Aguilar provides creative, customized, effective training and consulting interventions to address business and learning needs in the areas of diversity and multiculturalism. Services are available in English, Spanish, and French.

14. [What is the Strengths Perspective?](#)

Webpage

Provides resources to ensure that strengths-based concepts, ideals, values, and practices infuse all approaches to helping individuals, families, and communities, within and beyond social work.

15. [Making Case Management Work](#)

Book

This comprehensive training guide helps staff motivate the “unmotivated,” identify the strengths that makes change achievable, and empower participants to set goals and solve problems.

16. [Protocol for Serving Older Workers](#)

Guide

This document provides information to help One-Stop Career Centers enhance services provided to older workers, and inspire the workforce investment system to pursue innovative strategies for tapping into this labor pool and connecting them with the job market. The protocol outlines a set of action steps for key stakeholders.

ETA PROGRAMS

This section includes descriptions of ETA's Older Workers Program, Disabilities Program, Indian and Native American Program, and Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Program. Department of Labor and community-of-practice websites are listed if applicable.

Older Workers

The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) is a community service and work-based training program for older workers. It provides subsidized, part-time, community service training for unemployed, low-income persons 55 or older who have poor employment prospects. Through this program, older workers have access to SCSEP services and employment assistance through One-Stop Career Centers.

<http://www.doleta.gov/seniors/>

<https://olderworkers.workforce3one.org/>

Indians and Native Americans

ETA's Indian and Native American Programs (INAP), authorized under section 166 of the Workforce Investment Act, is designed to address poverty and unemployment among American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians by providing them with employment, training, and educational services in accordance with the values of such communities.

<http://www.doleta.gov/DINAP/>

<http://ina.workforce3one.org/>

People with DisAbilities

The Disabilities Program develops and implements workforce disability policy and program initiatives to address the structural, programmatic, and systemic employment challenges of persons with disabilities and those with multiple challenges to obtaining employment (including persons who are older, disabled veterans, homeless people, ex-offenders, those receiving TANF benefits, etc.).

<http://www.doleta.gov/disability/>

<https://disability.workforce3one.org/>

Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers

The National Farmworkers Jobs Program (NFJP) provides funding to community-based organizations and public agencies that help migrant and seasonal farmworkers (MSFW) and their families attain greater economic stability. The program helps farmworkers acquire new job skills in occupations that offer higher wages and a more stable employment outlook. In addition to skills training, the program provides supportive services that help farmworkers remain in and stabilize their employment in agriculture. The NFJP also facilitates coordination of services through the One-Stop Career Center system so that MSFWs may access the full spectrum of workforce system services.

<http://www.doleta.gov/msfw/>