

# Department of Workforce Services

## I. Internal Scan

What is the anticipated impact of increase in Utah's aging population on DWS?

- Demographic trends – The Department of Workforce Services (DWS) serves a very broad demographic because of the effort to effectively serve what we call the Universal customer in connecting to a job and the employer to find the right employee. The Universal customer is anyone who is legally available to work. However, many services are designed to serve the low income Utahan in a more intensive manner. The need for work connection and work support services will closely follow the impacts of economic growth, population growth, educational achievement of citizens including the ability to speak English, and the availability of a ready workforce.
- Consumers/constituency – Using the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget's baseline projections of the median age, Utahans still remain younger than the national median age over time by as much as seven years. On the other hand, the Utah median age is 28.8 years in 2006 while it is projected to be 31.5 years in 2030. The "aging" of Utah is apparent, although not as severe as in the nation as a whole. The numbers of working families who currently need work supports such as Medicaid and Food Stamps is continuing to increase. Because the age of the customer and the activity of the customer are changing, the method of accessing the service must also change whether the customer is employed or not.
- Overarching policies – Funding impacts policies. Since most funding of the agency is federal funds, policies will be impacted by the direction Washington DC mandates. It is the overarching policy of the agency to offer the service to those most in need when challenged to limit services because of funding. It is not expected that the agency will change that direction. Currently, the intensive services offered to eligible customers are targeted to occupations in demand. This policy is unlikely to change. Age is a neutral factor in determining the eligibility for most of the agency programs. On occasion, a service is targeted to an age group. This will also not change.
- Potential changes to programs, services, or oversight – Since most of the agency's funding is federal, the change to these programs will be based on the national trend to aging, which is greater nationally than in Utah. The Department of Agriculture will provide nutritional alternatives as well as maintain pressure on the states to assure services are accessible. The Department of Labor (DOL) has already started to focus on the impact aging has on the workforce and provided recommended protocols for the older worker. It should be noted that the trend in DOL is to reduce formula funding to all states and place those dollars in competitive targeted grants, meaning some funds will be more difficult to obtain. The Department of Human Services has to prepare for the likelihood of more

retired individuals needing financial and health supports because of the current propensity of companies to no longer offering strong pension plans for long time employees. The Department of Workforce Services recognizes the need to find multiple opportunities for customers to access services as well as the need to offer multiple options to internal staff in how our kind of work fits into their own lifestyle and life demands. Utah's birth rate will continue make available a Utah born workforce meaning the infrastructure of Utah will prepare much of our future workforce.

- Potential management changes – Partnerships with community agencies, county and local governments and education are crucial. There are enough examples now that demonstrate an important ingredient to efficient and effective service delivery is partnering with other providers of services. No one can afford duplication of services. In addition, it does not take much for systems to become too complex for the average citizen, not to mention the challenge to those who are aging and/or disabled. Access to services will be the focus of this agency in the next several years.
- Other issues - The issue of Economic Development deserves special attention. The Department of Workforce Services, the Governor's Office of Economic Development, Higher Education and Public Education have a responsibility to work closely together to assure that the workforce is ready for the future demands in skills and talent for a growing economy. The lack of a ready workforce is now a drag on our current booming economy. The need for joint efforts in attracting potential industries, producing an educated and stable workforce, planning for the additional specialized training necessary for the potential industries to succeed, and responding to the diverse populations we need to be that workforce is the challenge. The need for the older worker to stay in the workforce and even change to a new occupation in demand is not only the need of Utah, it will be necessary for more and more older workers for their economic well-being. Meeting this challenge will take strong partnerships, careful planning, and the ability for these partners to be responsive and flexible internally and externally.

What is DWS doing in preparation for these anticipated changes?

- Programs needing to respond to demographic changes – In determining the programs that will be impacted by the aging of Utah, it is simpler to identify the ones that may not be as impacted. These services are ones specified for youth and at-risk youth, the financial assistance program focused on the parents responsible for their dependent children and specialized services for aged Refugees. All other services will be impacted because they are designed to serve all ages as well as the older worker or elderly. A shift in the age level of those demanding services will impact service delivery methods.

- Potential changes to programs, services or oversight -
  - Customer education and access to services through technology
  - Implementing a protocol for serving the older worker
  - DWS Career Management System
  - Partnering with Economic Development and Education to assure a ready workforce.
  - Assuring DWS understands where there may be barriers to services because of age related issues through a policy review.

## II. Prioritizing

The three issues to be addressed by the Department of Workforce Services (DWS):

1. Customer access to services is critical to the ever-changing demographics of Utah. In addition to the aging population, access is also important to the working population and the limited English speaking population. What we are calling Eligibility Modernization is chosen because we want services needed for the well-being of individuals in Utah to be available through multiple means allowing more customers timely access. The effort will also make DWS much more efficient and cost effective (less administrative dollars means more service dollars), and we like the fact that besides the aging population, other populations will be positively impacted.
2. The Workforce Improvement Coordination Committee, as sub-committee of the Workforce Services State Council, is charged with assuring economic development, education, and workforce development agencies are coordinated and responsive to both the supply and demand side of the workforce. The committee will assure that planning and responses will include the aging population.
3. A policy review will be completed to assure that where the state has choices in the delivery of services, DWS does not have any unintentional barriers to the aging population who will be looking for services. Currently some critical services are in demand by the younger population, such as training and various work supports. We want to be prepared when the demand may shift to the older worker.

## III. Planning

The Work Plan remains valid and the priorities chosen for this brief are chosen based on activities already begun and the activities that will positively impact the customer as well as meet the efficiency expectations of the Governor.

## Priority Issue # 1 Eligibility Modernization

In January 2009, Eligibility Modernization will be about ¾ completed. The technology will either be developed and in place or almost ready for implementation. Agreements with community partners where customers may access benefit services or job connection services will be in place and working. Utah citizens and helping agencies will know about the accessibility of services and what choices they have for access. Because of the ease of access, citizens will know about the available benefits and services as well as understand them. The efficiencies expected by the Governor will start being realized through a centralized eligibility system, a statewide system for work distribution, and improved accuracy of the work. On-line and Interactive Voice Response Systems will be the preferred access method by most customers. The cost to access benefits and job connection will remain free to the public. Persons who had no desire to access needed services in the past because of inconvenience or stigma will start using the services they need.

**ACTION:** On line application implementation

**RESULTS:** Helping agencies or any individual can make the initial application for benefits on-line or still choose to print and mail the application. The majority of the population will no longer need to be make application or be interviewed in a DWS office. All interviews will be over the phone thus reducing the need for transportation by the disabled and aged.

**ACTION:** Development of community partners as access points to services

**RESULTS:** A customer can find help in completing the on-line application with other organizations in the community. The helping staff will find the process easy, quick and intuitive so the process can become part of their intervention instead of “just another burden” or having to send their customer to another office for benefits.

**ACTION:** Development of a statewide caseload model

**RESULTS:** With a statewide caseload, the over the phone access to the system will be much more responsive. A call can be routed to the next available staff anywhere in the state meaning less wait time and quicker answers. More staff with multiple language skills will be available for more time during the day because of the ability to route statewide.

**ACTION:** Interactive Voice Response System implementation:

**RESULTS:** Just like banks and other institutions, a system available 24/7 will be offered for up to the minute information about the status of the customer’s benefits. This system will also allow applications to be made over the phone for those without internet access or abilities.

## Priority Issue #2 Workforce Improvement Coordination Committee

The Workforce Improvement Coordination Committee: In January 2009, this committee, consisting of Workforce Service, Education and Economic Development leaders, will be fully functioning with a clear vision and the shared desire to address workforce and economic needs. This committee will fully understand the demographics of the state, the needs of Utah's aging population, and the necessity to put time and resources into the continued productivity of the older worker.

**ACTION:** Develop and present to the committee information on the demographics, economics, and workforce needs concerning the older worker.

**RESULTS:** All committee members will understand future needs and demands of the older population as it relates to education and economic development. Understanding will be apparent because resources are available to the older worker.

**ACTION:** Once per year, the committee will review what outcomes achieved by the committee improved the economic outcomes for the older worker. The committee will assign a letter grade to their efforts for the year.

**RESULTS:** Actual activities will be discussed. A value of their efforts will be measured and awareness to include this population in plans will be achieved.

## Priority #3 Policy Review

**Policy Review:** A complete policy review will assist the department to make substantive changes and meaningful plans for the future of services through public policy processes.

**ACTION:** Complete all services policy review

**RESULTS:** Executive level will have meaningful information to use in strategic planning of the department so the Department's strategic plan can include improvement of services to the aged needing benefits and services.

