

Northwest Regional Access Advisory Committee

Background, Duties, Structure

Background

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act encourages local boards to include in their governance structure advisory committees that provide information or propose strategies to assist the board in achieving its multiple goals, while serving a diverse set of job seeker and employer customers.

WIOA section 107 (b)(4)

The local board may designate and direct the activities of standing committees to provide information and assist the board.... Such standing committees shall be chaired by a member of the local board and shall include other individualswho are not members of the local board who the local board determines have appropriate experience and expertise. ...

One recurrent theme of the Opportunity Act is that boards should take steps to assure and to promote access to the workforce and related services available through the network of service providers to all populations. Access, in this context, refers to more than challenges that people with disabilities may have to access and utilize services in a physical one stop center. The Act identifies 14 specific “priority” populations, which may have unique barriers that make it more difficult for some of them to access the services and to participate fully in the range of services available both in the WorkSource Center environment and within the WorkSource partnership system. (See attached chart of the 14 Opportunity Act priority populations).

In response to this feature of the Opportunity Act, the Northwest Workforce Council has convened the **Regional One-Stop Access Advisory Committee**, as a standing advisory committee of the board.

Northwest Regional Access Advisory Committee

The Committee is chaired by a Council member, and will consist of representatives of the Opportunity Act’s program partners and other interested stakeholders in the system. The team is charged with ensuring improved access for all populations, including the 14 called out in the Act. Barriers to access may include: economic, geographic, physical, mental and/or behavioral health issues. The role of this team would be the identification of programmatic, process, cultural, and institutional barriers that get in the way of achieving the vision. The committee reports and may suggest the realignment of processes within each representative’s own agency to achieve integrated service delivery, both in the Center environment and within the workforce system.

Duties of the Regional Access Advisory Committee include:

- Develop the portions of the local WIOA Plan relating access to the system for all populations, as determined by the Council Chairperson. Ensure that interested community members are invited and involved in the design and implementation of these discussions and initiatives
- Subject to the approval of the WDC:
 - Recommending Best Practices for physical and programmatic accessibility to individuals with disabilities and/or other barriers (e.g.: economic, geographic, physical barriers).
 - Conducting oversight with respect to the access in the local area.
- Other duties determined to be appropriate by the Workforce Council Chair, such as establishing linkages with other entities
- Providing a forum for initial discussion on emerging issues affecting access for the WIOA 14 Eligible Populations and the workforce development system
- Responsible for Customer Satisfaction analysis of access and services, including recommending goals for improvement and increased accountability
- Coordinates with the Program Planning and Committee agenda and reports recommendations

This committee would build on, and broaden existing partnership teams. For many years the Northwest Workforce Development Area has maintained a partnership structure whose work is focused on improving center and system access. The Regional Access Team has convened and met regularly throughout the duration of the Workforce Investment Act. The products and outcomes of the Regional Access Team have included:

- NWC policy implemented August 2004: [Provision of Reasonable Accommodation, Reasonable Modification, and Auxiliary Aids and Services to Persons with Disabilities](#)
- A NW Partnership Process Improvement Team Reasonable Accessibility Team is formed with representation from each required workforce partner organization.
- Disability Navigator position assists in the implementation of universal design and access and staff training/deployment of assistive technology.
- [508 Compliance Style Guide: Guidelines for Accessible Documents, Presentations & Websites](#) is created locally and implemented statewide through WorkSource Brand Standards.
- Professional competencies developed and implemented for the system's Disability Specialists.
- Partnership team transitions its title from Regional Accessibility Team to Regional **Access** Team to better embrace the concept of access for all individuals.

That team has included staff from Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, the NWC's Equal Opportunity Officer, the WorkSource Regional Manager, Disabled Veteran Outreach Program Staff, Accessibility Resource Specialists from the Community and Technical Colleges, and Employment Security Staff, and recently staff from the Division of Services for the Blind.

The new advisory committee configuration will broaden participation to include representatives from other Opportunity Act partners and stakeholders, and operate as a standing advisory committee of the board, chaired by a board member. Meetings will be open to the public.

One additional feature of this proposed Committee would be that the work of the existing Northwest Workforce Council Youth Committee would be included in the charter of this new Regional Access Committee. The issues and barriers to full participation faced by Young Adults, particularly those young adults prioritized for service in the Opportunity Act (out of school youth including those who have dropped out of high school, youth in foster care, etc) are similar in nature to those of the other prioritized groups the work of this committee would address.

Information/Reporting

Issues identified through the Regional Access Advisory Committee (RAAC) or recommendations for action from that group will be primarily operational in nature. Any such recommendations will therefore be directed to the Northwest Workforce Management Team for that partner team to consider and operationalize as appropriate.

Any issues or recommendations from the RAAC that are more of a policy nature would be forwarded from the Northwest Workforce Management Team to the Planning Committee of the Northwest Workforce Council for consideration and recommendation for action, if any is warranted, to the Executive Committee of the Council for further consideration. Attached is a chart representing the NWC Committee and Team Structure, including the (RAAC).