

# **Not Just Getting By: The New Era of Flexible Workforce Development**

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- A high school educated single mother with two children under the age of ten, working two jobs— three days a week a part-time bookkeeper at the local church, and weekends a waitress at the diner.
- She earns about \$15,000 a year, and literally lives paycheck to paycheck. A few slow shifts at the diner and she is unable to pay her bills.
- She needs skills training in order to get a higher paying job, but how will she fit classes into her day; how will she pay for them?
- Locating affordable and “off hours” childcare (such as on nights and weekends when many classes are offered) often proves to be a daunting and expensive task. In addition, she may be among the one-third of families who earn \$15,000 or less and do not own a car.

**What can we do to help her gain access to education and skills training?**

# What We Need To Do:

- Democratize access to education and skills training primarily by:
  - Capitalizing on new technology
  - Forming and maintaining collaborations that cut through red tape to deliver services

# States Must Rethink The Way They Deliver Workforce Development Programs to Reach All Underserved Population

- A growing number of working poor face:
  - Childcare needs
  - Irregular work schedule
  - Transportation inequities
  - Lack of access to One-Stop Centers and Classes
    - » Rural areas
    - » Workers with disabilities
  - Unsuccessful classroom learning experiences
  - State bureaucratic structures

# State's Begin to Capitalize on New Technology

- Online Learning is being used to upgrade skills:
  - Single working poor mothers
  - Reentry population
  - Diploma Recovery Program
  - Rural populations
  - Welfare to Work participants
  - Entry-Level state employees

# NJ Program of Online Learning

- Single mother, average earning \$16,000
- Intake interview to assess one's ability to work independently
- Each participant received computer, printer, Internet access, and courses for a year
- Each participant received access to One-Stop Center's resources (job coach, resume writing, job search skills)
- Training was tied to local demand jobs

# Findings

- High retention rate- 128 participants only  
11 left the program (92 % retention rate)
- Average wage increase – 14%
- Women also entered college and  
community college programs

# Findings

- **ALL the women felt they would have not have had the opportunity to take courses and increase their technological skills without this online program**
- Flexibility in Time and Space
  - Work around their schedules
  - Laptop Computers
- Helps alleviate childcare demands
  - Age of children is important
  - Family literacy effects
- Helps alleviate transportation demands
  - Access to course not available in local area
- Participation in the program increases women's confidence and self-esteem

# Cost-Effective Alternative

- Cost effective for states
  - \$3,000 per participant (including computer, printer, Internet access and courses for a year – select from hundreds)
- Cost effective to participants
  - Childcare
  - Transportation
  - Work hours
  - Access to courses not locally available

# Systemic Change

- Technologically innovative programs must be part of a state workforce agenda that is flexible and based on partnerships
- Central to this is reorganizing the way that workforce development is conceptualized and implemented

# New Workforce Development System

- Streamline services using technology
- Focus on employers and workers
- Vision of lifelong learning
- Demand side approach
- Co-locate all “to work” programs in one agency
- Coordinate workforce development with economic development

# Collaboration

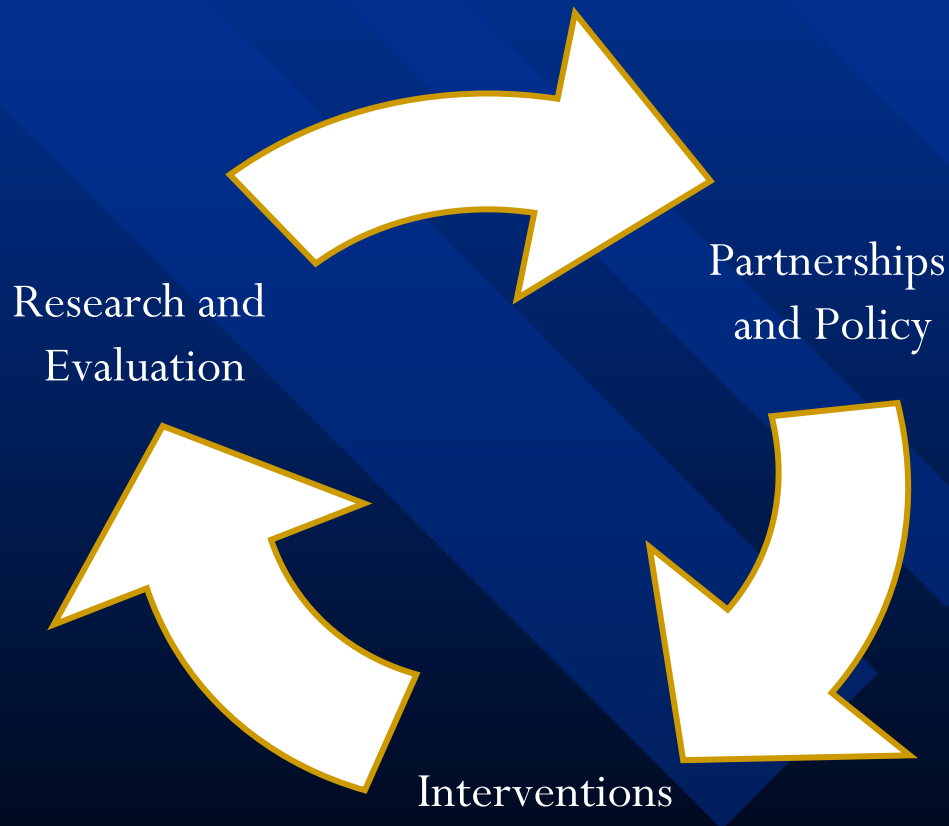
- Public Sector
- Academia
- State & Local Workforce Communities
- Employers
- Labor and Community Based Organizations
- Philanthropic Organizations
- Nonprofit Organizations

# Leadership

- Workforce development must be a state priority
- Commitment from the top leaders and policy officials
- Part of a larger vision of promoting opportunities for education and skills training for all workers

# Developing An Agenda for Workforce Development

## The Process



# The Strategy

- Influence workforce development policy and programs at the State level
  - Not isolated programs, but working toward the institutionalization of online learning alternatives within the workforce delivery system of each state
- Form a community of practitioners who are innovatively using technology
  - National Summit December 16<sup>th</sup>

# Tipping Point!

- Alabama
- Arizona
- Delaware
- District of Columbia
- Illinois
- Maine
- Massachusetts
- Texas
- Among Others!

# Recommendations

- Workforce development dollars need to be directed to the working poor, as well as the unemployed
- Legislation that encourages technological innovations, such as online learning, in workforce development
  - Make online learning a real option in the One-Stops
  - Allow for the purchase of computers and other equipment
- Incentives to corporations that partner with local One-Stops in providing hardware/software and Internet access
- Incentives to workforce development centers to partner with community based organization that can assist in the case management of a high-tech, high-touch environment
- Support research that follows learners over time