



## **Strategic Alliances**

### **Approved by IWP on February 8, 2008**

At the IWP 2007 retreat, one objective discussed and approved by the organization was developing and formalizing strategic alliances between IWP and certain other organizations statewide and nationally. Rooted in discussions of “E3” (Education/Employment/Economic Development) and the reality that in an ever changing and challenging world (our economy, funding for all levels of social/human capital programs, public workforce system, structure of LWAs, etc.), we realize the importance of relationship building and collaboration. Development of “Strategic Alliances” is essential for enhancing our role and moving forward mutually beneficial goals.

## GOALS OF STRATEGIC ALLIANCE DEVELOPMENT:

- To foster and enhance relationships between workforce development, economic development and education.
- To promote the role and benefits of IWP and the workforce investment system.
- To provide recommendations on curriculum development in our role as a convener of stakeholders that could facilitate change, business services, economic development, educational and other program development to our partners to facilitate the improvement of policies, systems and programs.
- To facilitate the improvement of services to businesses and job seekers through collaboration and coordination.

Based on the results from an online survey conducted with the IWP members, the following organizations were ranked as the most important for building strategic alliances:

- Economic Development organizations and their associations
- Chambers of Commerce, Business associations such as Illinois Manufacturing Association, Illinois Restaurant Association, etc.
- Chief Elected Officials in addition to our local CEOs
- Education systems and operators, i.e. K-12, Colleges, Extension offices, Alternative schools, etc.

The top three reasons for selecting the above organizations were:

- Similar goals to IWP
- Compatible with proposed IWP strategic alliance goals
- Similar constituents/customers

### Action Plan:

The IWP would facilitate statewide relationships with the top ranked organizations rather than building partnerships with local organizations. Local workforce areas currently have or are building local and regional relationships, therefore IWP resources are best utilized for growing macro partnerships. For example, the IWP would work with an organization such as the Illinois Chamber of Commerce and statewide associations of economic development (non-government) rather than local chapters.

The officers and committee chairs of IWP, acting on behalf of the organization, would develop a plan to initiate contacts and build “high altitude” strategic relationships with state level organizations that would increase awareness of and improve the visibility of IWP. This statewide approach would assist with marrying our efforts on the local and regional level. The high altitude strategic relationship-building plan would address the following:

- Revisiting the purpose and objectives of IWP by surveying the members to determine whether they are still valid

Developing a brief written statement that identifies the strategic reason, purpose, and value of a strategic relationship as a way of formalizing the commitment between IWP and partners. Establishing responses to the following background questions would provide insight and information for IWP to present to potential strategic partners:

*What are the features and benefits of the IWP?*

*Does the IWP perform a good job/achieve its mission?*

*Would an organization understand what the IWP has to offer?*

*Is the IWP recognized as a respected center of workforce development leadership? Why or why not?*

*Is the IWP effective, is it clearly communicated and how can it become more effective?*

*What are the benefits of partnering with the IWP?*

*How do organizations perceive the IWP?*

*Who are current partners? (Labor, CJC, IWIB)*

*What are the most important features of IWP that would add value to a strategic alliance with an organization?*

*Would an alliance with IWP satisfy a strategic goal/objective of an organization?*

*What is the downside of partnering with IWP? What would make it worth one's while? What are IWP priorities?*

*What do we want from partners?*

*Where are we now and where do we want to go?*

*Develop a plan to embrace strategic alliances and identify ways for:*

- *Organizations to use IWP to meet their mission*
- *Keeping organizations engaged through communication, joint planning and policy making processes*
- *Evaluating alliances that mutually benefit and strengthen the partnership*

*Measuring effectiveness and accountability.*

*What kind of organization would benefit from a strategic alliance with IWP?*

- *Adopting strategic alliance partnerships as a formal organizational goal for 2007-2008 and beyond.*
- *Inviting the top ranked strategic alliance organizations to IWP for brainstorming sessions to discuss the existing interactions between our systems/entities, the*

potential for further coordination and collaboration, and the common interests we share.

- Attending our partner meetings and making presentations on the value of building the relationship for the purpose of:
  - Coordinated advocacy/policy development
  - Coordinated legislative advocacy
  - Cooperation on project plans or grant proposals
  
- Formalizing relationships through letters of support, memorandums of understanding or other methods

IWP, as the voice of workforce development in Illinois, has approved several position papers that consistently point out that developing the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce is critically important in a globally competitive environment. The IWP's next steps include fine-tuning our elevator speech and guiding principles as the messenger and voice of the workforce development system. By focusing on these actions we can open up the doors plus leverage and strengthen relationships.