



## **A Report on the 2015 Community Conversations Project:**

A listening tour designed to strengthen workforce  
programs in San Diego County

**Prepared for the San Diego Workforce Partnership**  
August 3, 2015



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## I. Executive Summary

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) provides San Diego a vehicle for re-imagining the provision of its youth, adult and business services programs for job seekers and job providers. In recognition of this opportunity, The San Diego Workforce Partnership (SDWP) sought to facilitate a series of “community conversations” throughout San Diego County with key stakeholders in the workforce community – youth and adult program participants, providers and community partners, and employers – to solicit their input on what is working well, to identify unfulfilled needs, and to think creatively about new opportunities for programming, partnership and collaboration.

To elicit the most stakeholder-specific responses possible, the target audiences for each session were segmented (e.g., adults were asked to attend a meeting that was separate from youth, employers, and providers/community partners). In addition, to ensure these conversations were as unbiased as possible, SDWP hired a firm to professionally facilitate the meetings and those staff that worked most closely with the stakeholders were asked not to attend. These conversations took place during June and July 2015; they involved 108 participants attending sessions at four locations throughout the county.

The following summarizes the key observations and recommendations shared by participants:

1. Individual case management is critically important however case management services are not delivered uniformly throughout the county
2. Extend case management support after job placement to assist with retention issues
3. There is an inadequate supply of computers and a lack of reliable internet access
4. Relationships with employers, providers and job seekers must be strengthened
5. Soft skills training must be increased
6. Basic skills training must be increased
7. Wrap around services should be more readily available to job seekers (e.g., assistance obtaining bus passes and transportation planning; understanding how to access child care; understanding how CALWORKS impacts employment, etc.)
8. A central website must be developed to enable job seekers to access and submit information
9. The availability of training and internship programs must be better advertised
10. The SDWP “brand” should be associated with all Career Centers and programs
11. SDWP should serve as a regular convener of provider agencies to exchange best practice information and to connect the Career Centers to each other
12. SDWP should increase marketing of the program to employers and be an active broker between employers and provider organizations

The full results of these conversations are described in detail within this report. Participants were enthusiastic about the opportunity to share their experiences and thoughts. Many thoughtful ideas were proposed which should serve to strengthen the SDWP workforce preparedness and delivery system.

## II. Overview of the Project and Methodology

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), signed into law in July 2014, provides San Diego a vehicle for re-imagining the provision of its youth, adult and business services programs for job seekers and job providers. In recognition of this opportunity, The San Diego Workforce Partnership (SDWP) sought the services of a consultant who could facilitate a series of “community conversations” throughout the county of San Diego with key stakeholders in the workforce community – youth and adult participants, providers and community partners, and employers – to solicit their input on what is working well, to identify unfulfilled needs, and to think creatively about new opportunities for programming, partnership and collaboration. It was envisioned that feedback from these community stakeholders could be used to guide SDWP’s implementation plan and funding framework for WIOA.

The firm Pat Libby Consulting was chosen to lead this process. The firm’s namesake is an experienced consultant, MIT-trained urban planner, community economic development specialist, and frequent facilitator of complex community conversations. Since 1978 she has served the philanthropic and public sectors in a variety of capacities including as academic, senior executive, board member and consultant to innumerable organizations. Libby engaged Crystal Trull to assist with the project. Trull has more than 15 years of executive experience as a consultant to, and manager of, nonprofit organizations.

The pair began the project in May 2015 by meeting with a team of SDWP staff led by Andrew Picard, Manager of Adult Programs and Strategic Initiatives, to gain a better understanding of the goals for the project, to discuss strategies for approaching the task, to clarify roles between staff and consultants, and to learn more about the existing structure for workforce readiness in San Diego County. In addition to Mr. Picard, the meeting also included Kelley Ring, Senior Business & Research Analyst; Amanda Cheyney, Youth Program Specialist; and Daniella Ledezma, Adult Program Specialist. Heather Milne Barger, Vice President of Communications, joined subsequent conversations and was active throughout the project.

The RFP for this project called for consultants to *“facilitate and lead a total of twelve (12) community conversations, one in each of SDWP’s geographic regions (north county, south county, east county, and metro area): - 4 meetings focused on Youth Programs - 4 meetings focused on Adult Programs - 4 meetings focused on Services to Businesses.”* However during the initial meeting with the consultants and the SDWP team, the consultants proposed that the project results would be more robust if each stakeholder group was convened separately as a way of reducing bias and engendering a more frank and critical discussion among the participants. Segregating the stakeholders would expand the scope of work required for the project from 12 to 16 conversations, however the consultants knew these discussions would ultimately yield more productive and directed feedback. They further stated their willingness to do so within the limits of the original project budget.

Subsequent to that meeting, the consulting team conducted research on WIOA to familiarize themselves with the initiative and drafted protocols including probing questions that would be used to guide each community conversation with Adults, Youth, Providers/Community Partners,

and Employers. It was agreed that the SDWP staff responsible for working most closely with the organization's partners would not be present at any of these meetings to encourage a more open exchange of ideas among the attendees. The SDWP managers worked with the consultants to refine the protocol and questions for the conversations and agreed to handle public notices and other marketing initiatives for the effort. Please see community conversation protocol in Attachment A. Please see an example of a public notice in Attachment B.

The conversations took place from mid-June 2015 through the third week of July 2015 at Career Centers located in each of the four regions of the county (please see schedule of conversations in Attachment C). A total of 108 people participated in the conversations including 39 providers, 34 adults, 28 youth, and 7 employers. Due to the fact that those participating did not necessarily work for or use programs in the region where they attended a conversation, it was determined that providing these figures in aggregate would be the most appropriate way of reporting participation numbers. It should be noted as well that even though employers were the least well represented group of attendees, their comments were much more consistent with one another than those of other participant groups.

The findings of this report will describe in detail the ideas expressed by those attending the conversations. What it does not fully convey is the enthusiasm that was voiced by many about the opportunity to share their experiences and suggestions with the consultants. At the end of every session, participants thanked the consultants for the opportunity to be heard and several suggested that sessions like the one they attended be held on a regular basis. Participants were eager to not only share their frustrations but to provide ideas for how workforce programs in San Diego can be strengthened. Moreover, many new ideas proposed by attendees appear to be innovative, cost effective, and recognize a central leadership role for SDWP.

### III. Key Findings of Community Conversations

To facilitate an understanding of the critical needs and issues that were expressed during the conversations, this section of the report is organized as follows:

#### A. Adult Job Seeker Needs

1. Unskilled and entry-level adult job seekers
2. Skilled adult job seekers
3. Needs common to all adult job seekers

#### B. Youth Needs

#### C. Recommendations for provider organizations/Career Centers

3. Adult job seekers
4. Youth job seekers

#### D. Recommendations for SDWP

#### A. Adult Job Seeker Needs

The reasons adults cited for accessing services included the need for additional income to supplement Social Security, to make a career change after being laid off or being notified of an imminent lay off, to learn new job skills, to validate existing skills by earning a certificate or credential, to increase their earning capacity, to get a job in their new country and to address the challenges of acculturation issues. Many adults talked about facing age discrimination in the workplace and their desire for help to address this issue.

##### 1. **Needs specific to unskilled and entry level adult job seekers**

Soft skills: According to Collins English Dictionary, soft skills are “Desirable qualities for certain forms of employment that do not depend on acquired knowledge: they include common sense, the ability to deal with people and a positive flexible attitude.”

Soft skill needs commonly mentioned during the community conversations pertained to customer service including telephone etiquette, problem-solving skills, and business etiquette; information on how to dress professionally, arrive on time, call in sick; skills and strategies for working in teams and with a supervisor including listening skills, demonstrating a positive attitude and coaching on sexism; skills for stress management, balancing work and home life and other skills related to job retention. Empathy skills were called out for those preparing for health-related careers.

Every employer spoke at length about “boot camp” programs they offered to teach soft skills. Most were multi-week programs designed to orient workers to the culture of the company and to weed out prospective employees that did not have the motivation to succeed within that environment or the inclination for a particular type of work (for instance, some placed in health-related jobs were ill-suited for such a career).

Proficiency testing and training in basic literacy and office skills: Knowing basic math, how to write a simple letter, and how to compose an email were often cited as skills that were lacking from this group. In addition, providers and employers spoke about the need to train job seekers how to use office equipment and to provide basic typing and computer skills.

Psychological support and coaching: Employers and providers referred repeatedly to a “huge problem” of many employees having a sense of entitlement that was expressed by the employee as feeling “disrespected.” Similarly, anger management counseling surfaced as a need for some participants. On-going coaching and support was cited by all stakeholders as being critically important for job placement and retention.

Use of technology: Participants in this category need individualized assistance understanding how to use technology for things such as filing out online job applications.

GED or high school equivalency: Lower-skilled participants, providers and employers all spoke about the need to support adult job seekers in their quest to acquire a GED or high school equivalency.

## 2. Needs specific to skilled adult job seekers

Transition support: Financial support for a career transition such as job training funds, mortgage relief funds, and temporary employment opportunities were needs voiced by this group.

Networking support: Opportunities to learn from other job seekers who are “middle-class like us,” to network with employers, and to understand how to use social media such as LinkedIn were frequent requests.

Workshop quality: Skilled workers complained that many of the workshops were too basic for their needs (please see Recommendations section for more information).

Training program snafus and gaps: Several skilled workers related stories about frustrating training experiences.

One example was from a worker laid off from a long-term job at the San Onofre Nuclear Power Plant who successfully completed a training program in Water Technology at Mission Career College. He was excited about discovering this new career path which was the result of an aptitude test he took at the Career Center. The College was listed as an eligible training provider by the Center, however upon completion of the program, the State Water Resources Control Board refused to certify him because it did not recognize credentials awarded by that

institution. According to the job seeker, when he asked his case manager to intervene, she said “it is out of my hands.” With his training benefits expired, he had no choice but to re-take the entire certificate at Palomar College whose courses he described as being “not as strong as where I earned the certificate.” Mission Career College had placed him in an internship which had led to several job interviews in the days surrounding our conversation however, it was unclear about whether he would be able to be hired without a certificate from the state. He had one semester remaining at Palomar College.

Others talked about completing certificates and not having access to internships that would enable them to practice the skills they learned in the classroom (and ideally, prove their worth to an employer). One spoke about enrolling in a training program of architectural CAD design because it was the closest thing to the skills he needed, (CAD design for civil engineering) even though it did not match his training needs. He eventually landed a job on his own.

### **3. Needs common to all adult job seekers**

Work support: Assistance with obtaining bus passes and with transportation planning including assistance accessing auto loans; understanding how to access child care; understanding how CALWORKS impacts employment; and learning how to access other public benefits such as CALFRESH were common refrains.

Emotional support and follow-through: Adult job seekers of all skill levels spoke about the critical role of case managers in providing moral and emotional support during the job search and in holding job seekers accountable. Case managers were praised in North and East County for the supportive role they played and criticized in South County and Metro for not providing sufficient support. Job seekers acknowledged that case managers often have such a large workload that it is virtually impossible for them to provide the one-on-one support that is needed, however, many voiced frustration that the case managers were insensitive to the plight of job seekers. One said, “Those of us looking for jobs are desperate with fear; case managers need to be more empathetic to that.” Some case managers were said to distribute job announcements that were not relevant to the skills of the job seekers, making those participants feel that their specific needs were being ignored.

When case managers were engaged with clients, it made an enormously positive impact on the experience of job seekers. Words such as “uplifting, supportive, encouragement, personalized, accessible and caring” were attributed to many case managers.

Aptitude testing: Skill and aptitude testing were identified as being highly valued by all job seekers as a tool for helping them hone in on potential new careers. However, some voiced concern that the tests being administered were outdated. Employers emphasized the need for placement counselors to screen applicants carefully to ensure they were well-matched for careers.

Access to computers and other office equipment: A hot-button issue was the lack of availability of computers, lack of access to reliable internet service (there were frequent complaints that

the system at Career Centers was often “down”), and that other equipment such as fax machines and copiers were broken. Career Center policies limited computer use to one hour which was insufficient for many job seekers. Complaints were expressed that some participants were not using the computers for appropriate purposes and that there was no policing of these violators. A frequent complaint regarded unreliable internet service.

Resume preparation and cover letter assistance: Although resume preparation was a need expressed by both types of job seekers, skilled job seekers were equally concerned about the lack of personnel to review cover letters on an as-needed or walk-in basis. Many talked about the need to wait several weeks for an appointment with a job coach to review a cover letter.

Interview preparation: When available through a Career Center, adults noted that mock interviews were extremely helpful and gave them confidence to move forward. Skilled adults did however, request support with technical language support for industry-specific job interviews.

Training or Re-training in specific job skills: Adults across the board expressed frustration about not understanding which training programs were available to them, not being able to access or afford the upfront costs of training programs for lack of available funds, and lamented the limited number of training choices.

Those that did receive training, had mixed results. A South County participant trained as a bus driver landed a job with the school district. A metal worker in North County had a choice of job offers. Others were not as successful and attributed their lack of success to not having access to internships, case managers not connecting them to jobs in that industry or a lack of jobs in that industry.

Exposure to careers and career environments: Job seekers emphasized the need for paid internships as a way for adults to apply skills they had learned in certification programs as well as to give adults the opportunity to audition for permanent jobs.

Access to employers: Requests were made for more meetings with employers in order to learn employer expectations, to establish relationships with employers, and to learn about different fields. Field trips were commonly mentioned as a useful way for job seekers to learn more about different careers. Job seekers wanted to have more of these opportunities.

Job fairs seemed to be working successfully in the Metro Region and South County but were reported by participants to be unsuccessful in East and North County. Providers and job seekers reported that industry-specific job fairs were the most successful.

Hard skills office training: Employers and job seekers alike spoke about the need for training in Word, Excel, Power Point, and Outlook.

ESL: Although this is somewhat related to basic literacy for entry-level workers, there was a clearly articulated and evident need for additional English language classes for job seekers at all

levels. Professionally skilled workers from non-English speaking countries, asked for language training that was industry-specific. They believed this was particularly critical for the job interview process.

Opportunities for adults with disabilities: Providers spoke about the need to educate employers about the opportunities and benefits related to hiring adults with disabilities. These benefits included dedication to the company evidenced by good attendance, on-time reporting, longevity in jobs, etc.

Assistance for ex-offenders: This population was mentioned briefly by providers and participants as one needing additional life-skills and coaching support.

## B. Youth Job Seeker Needs

Youth described accessing services because they wanted assistance preparing a resume, to understand basic world of work skills, to identify career paths, to gain the confidence to find a job, to obtain job-related experience, to earn money, and as a probation requirement.

Life skills: Youth talked extensively about the need for life skills such as learning how to develop a budget, write checks, pay bills, obtain credit, read a pay stub, and pay taxes. They also wanted help understanding how to find an apartment and go grocery shopping which one called “help finding our place in the world.”

Soft skills: As with unskilled or entry-level adult participants, youth and providers spoke at length about the need for youth to be trained in soft skills and reported a high degree of satisfaction with this training. A typical comment was “I’ve learned how to fill out a time sheet and do customer service. I have interviewing skills and I learned about work relationships.”

Vocational training and career counseling: Providers discussed the need for youth to have access to vocational training as an important mechanism for helping youth access higher wages. One said “We aren’t always doing well by youth. We place them in a job but it isn’t necessarily the highest paying job. The [high] schools are so college focused; we need to be able to guide those that aren’t college-bound to vocational training opportunities.” It was suggested that teachers work more closely with placement counselors to familiarize themselves with the workshops, internships, and other resources that are available to assist youth.

One youth reported securing a job at Jack-in-the-Box through a job fair advertised through Connect2Careers as well as an internship at the restaurant, Tender Greens. However this 20 year old already possessed an Associate’s degree in Social and Behavioral Health and was interested in pursuing a career in a health related field. Her case manager did not refer her to any training or internship programs that matched her interest. When asked why she thought this was the so, her response was that her case manager had 50 people to assist.

Case management: Not surprisingly, case management was critically important to youth who looked to their case managers for guidance, coaching and emotional support. Most youth reported a high degree of satisfaction with their case managers.

Internships: Providers spoke about the difficulty of finding employers that were willing to hire someone without any job experience. Youth, providers and employers all spoke about the importance of providing youth with internships that would provide hands-on experience to match vocational education programs and as a mechanism through which youth could “try on” careers and employers could audition youth for permanent jobs.

Proficiency testing and training in basic literacy and office skills: Knowing basic math, how to write a simple letter, and how to compose an email were often cited as skills that were lacking from this group. Employers spoke about the need to train youth job seekers in how to use office equipment.

Time: Youth and providers both mentioned a desire to have more time to work together in order to better meet the needs of youth. Providers specifically addressed the challenges of working with at-risk youth including:

- Homelessness
- Gang affiliation
- Foster youth
- Lack of a safety net
- Lack of skills and experience
- Drug and alcohol problems
- Criminal history
- Mental health

Providers spoke about the need for more in depth wrap around services to support this population as well as negotiating different contracted benchmarks to determine success. Please see Recommendations section below.

Also mentioned by providers were the specific needs of refugee youth including the need to provide additional support to those who were not developmentally mature, as well as to assist refugee youth with language and acculturation issues. Providers also spoke about how to meet the needs of at-risk youth as mandated by WIOA.

### **C. Recommendations for Provider Organizations/Career Centers**

The overall tone of the community conversations throughout the county was one of excitement: participants were eager to share their ideas on how the workforce readiness and job placement system could be strengthened. All of the participants voiced gratitude for the availability of Career Centers and provider organizations.

## 1. Adults

### Strengthen Inter-organization collaboration:

Off-site workshops: It was proposed that Career Centers conduct off-site workshops once a week at provider organizations in order to promote the resources available through the Centers. This would produce “a warm hand-off” to Career Center case managers. Suggested workshop topics were interviewing skills, resume building, and skills/strategies for retaining a job.

Quarterly meetings: Several groups suggested the idea of quarterly meetings of employers, community colleges, high schools, and nonprofit providers convened by the Career Centers and marketed under the brand of SDWP. Providers expressed a belief that these meetings could help them better understand the types of skills businesses are seeking as well as become more familiar with the programs and services available throughout the network.

Recruit outside experts for technical assistance workshops: It was suggested that credit unions and banks become more involved in providing training on credit counseling and budgeting. Organizations such as San Diego Futures Foundation could be enlisted to provide workshops that would meet the computer training needs of participants at a variety of levels.

Increase and make better use of technology: It is evident that the number of computers available to job seekers must be increased and that access to the internet must be improved. This was a constant refrain in conversations involving adult job seekers.

In addition, many participants spoke about the need for a central website that would contain the following information:

- A single registration system that would be valid at all career centers
- A list of all available training programs and the qualifications required for each
- A sign-up sheet for workshops and classes
- A portal for posting timesheets (there were many complaints about paper time cards)
- A list of job fairs
- A central list of job openings
- Links to other programs
- Information about transportation including how to apply for a driver’s license

Increase counseling resources: Participants varied in their appraisal of case managers/job counselors however, all agreed that having a case manager who was genuinely concerned about the individual and available to provide one-on-one assistance was considered key to accessing training, accessing job opportunities and keeping a job. Participants also recognized that case managers were overwhelmed by the volume of clients they were tasked with serving. To address this situation, several different conversation groups suggested that targeted groups of volunteers be recruited to assist case managers. The Society of Human Resource Managers was specifically mentioned as a volunteer group that could provide capable resume preparation

assistance as well as coaching. Other suggestions included connecting job seekers with employer mentors and with successful participants.

Providers, employers and job seekers all spoke repeatedly about the need for follow-up services post job placement to help with retention issues.

Improve and standardize workshop quality: As mentioned previously, skilled workers complained that many of the workshops were too basic for their needs. In addition, several reported that many workshops were disorganized as they were led by presenters that did not cover all of the information they promised to convey during a given session. It was suggested that employers be recruited to conduct workshops in order for participants to understand what types of skills employers were seeking. This may be easy to achieve given that all of the employers interviewed in this process already offered their own in-house training programs.

Several participants suggested that Career Centers add workshops or, partner with agencies that already offer workshops, on self-sufficiency skills that would cover topics such as transportation planning, obtaining credit, household budgeting, and balancing work and family responsibilities.

An additional suggestion was for workshops to be divided into two components – a presentation and a practicum. For example, a workshop on resume development could then be followed by a clinic where the presenter and others could critique the resumes of participants; a workshop on interviewing skills could be followed by a series of mock interviews, etc.

Redefine the role of the Career Centers: Several job seekers and providers spoke about a desire to see the Career Centers return to a model where they functioned more along the lines of an employment agency/job developer. It was stated that Centers must have a better understanding of the job market/available jobs, the skills a work-ready candidate must have to meet those job requirements, and a strategy to assist those who are not work ready.

Conversation participants also voiced a strong desire for Career Centers to streamline their policies and procedures. Job seekers were frustrated by having to register independently at different Career Centers when they relocated from another area of the county. They also objected to having to wait to take workshops until after they attended a formal orientation – a process that sometimes caused several weeks of delay in a job seeker receiving services. One suggested that the orientation consist of a video accessible at all Career Centers and/or online explaining how the system works and the services offered.

Career Centers were also asked to be sensitive to the needs of clients with limited means and as such, make an attempt to reduce the number of trips required to and from the Career Center. Several suggested Career Centers should either provide or partner with organizations that offer wrap-around services in order to facilitate access to public assistance programs.

## 2. Youth

Collaborate more closely with schools: Youth wanted their teachers to work more closely with job placement counselors at provider organization in order to become knowledgeable about workshops and resources that are available through these agencies (they specifically mentioned resume preparation and interviewing skills coaching). They suggested much more time needs to be dedicated at school assemblies to introducing students to the availability of vocational training programs (it was noted the ITT Tech is allowed to present at school assemblies but that students were generally unaware of other training options). In addition employers suggested that teachers work more closely with placement counselors to screen students in order to make sure they are well-suited for internships/careers.

Allow providers more time to serve youth: There were strongly expressed feelings that the performance measures for serving at-risk youth needed to be renegotiated. It was noted for example, that some youth come in and out of the system and need time to build trust with their counselors. Performance metrics could be altered to reflect benchmarks such as earning a certificate or a high school diploma, rather than be solely focused on job placement. This would enable provider organizations to better serve those who are most in need of assistance rather than “creaming” the most job ready candidates.

Develop on-going relationships with employers: It was suggested that employers be brought in as guest speakers to discuss what types of qualities and skills they are looking for in employees. This way employers can develop informal relationships with the youth which will remove some of the intimidation factor for this population.

Increase career counseling: Youth spoke about the need for more career counseling, field trips to different employers, opportunities for job shadowing, and opportunities for hands on work “to see if we like it.” Many spoke about not being aware of the complete list of internship opportunities at the beginning of the program and several employers complained that youth were placed in internships that did not match their skills and interest. One youth complained that she and several others lost several months of time when her case manager left the organization and “all of our test results were lost.”

Develop a comprehensive website: See recommendation under “Adults” above.

#### IV. Recommendations for SDWP

##### Foster collaboration through facilitation and branding:

There is tremendous respect for the SDWP brand. Providers and community partners spoke about their desire for SDWP to leverage their influence by facilitating active collaboration among the Career Centers and between Career Centers and community partners. They expressed a desire for SDWP to convene Career Centers and providers across regions on a regular basis as a way of sharing best practices and ensuring consistency.

In addition, providers spoke about a wish to see all job readiness and placement efforts branded under the SDWP umbrella. This, they believed, would foster cooperation, coherence and add prestige to the efforts.

As mentioned previously, all provider conversation groups expressed a desire for quarterly meetings with businesses, community colleges, high schools, and nonprofits that would be convened by the Career Centers in order to help providers understand what kinds of skills businesses are seeking from employees. The SDWP name should be tied to these events and staff should be involved in orchestrating and supporting the events.

It was asked that SDWP facilitate regional connections for support services. For example, a one-stop shop that could provide Food Stamp certification, housing vouchers, transportation, and job readiness programs, etc. This could be in the form of a website or convening meetings of providers.

Finally in the area of collaboration, it was asked that SDWP diversify its regional board representation in terms of geographic and ethnic participation.

##### Increase outreach to and cultivation of employers:

Providers strongly voiced the need for SDWP to play a greater role educating employers about the availability of programs. It was suggested that the SDWP host forums on specific employment sectors as a way of ensuring that providers have the most up-to-date and accurate information on employee needs and as a way to broker relationships between employers and providers. These meetings should include hiring managers.

It was additionally suggested that SDWP could play a role brokering relationships between agencies and employers by, for example, offering tours of agencies to highlight the work they do and how it is relevant to employer needs (a point was made that this is particularly important for organizations working with individuals who have mental and behavioral health issues and those working with the disability population). It was hoped that these connections would promote a culture of employers contacting agencies directly for referrals.

Employers mentioned the need to streamline the paperwork involved in the incentive process. One person said “interns can be a hard sell. The paperwork involved documenting and tracing interns deters employers from participating in the program.”

One adult participant spoke about using TV and radio as a means of exposing job candidates to employers. He credited his landing a job as a result of TV exposure (this was a skilled worker).

Conduct and disseminate job market research:

Provider organizations lauded the SDWP for its research activities and asked that those activities be continued and strengthened through a partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor Statistics in order for better regional employment trends reporting. Providers also asked that SDWP convene employers on a regular basis to better understand regional workforce needs.

Standardize services offered through the Career Centers:

It became evident during these conversations that the types and quality of the services provided varied greatly from Center to Center. The SDWP needs to ensure that all Centers offer high quality case management, administer the same skills tests, have equipment that is fully functioning, and offer the same opportunities for workshops and training.

Consider allocating funding for the following activities:

- Paid internships for adults
- Additional money or matching money to pay for training/certificate programs
- Purchasing additional computers and better internet service for provider organizations
- Hiring volunteer managers at Career Centers to coordinate support to case managers and to assist in job development
- Providing professional development training for case managers
- Creating a website that contains the elements listed on p. 12 of this report as well as making SDWP’s website more user friendly for providers and employers
- Allocating funds for soft skills training
- Allocating funds for post-job-placement follow-up

Develop a media campaign to promote the program to job seekers and employers:

Almost all youth and adult participants spoke about discovering the program through word of mouth. Many suggested SDWP brand the program with its providers and promote it through social media including Face Book, Twitter, Instagram and Snap Chat. Youth suggested the program could be more heavily marketed through schools. Also mentioned were advertising the programs on TV, radio through community centers, community colleges and religious institutions.

Keep these conversations going:

As each session concluded, the consultants were surprised to hear participants saying “there needs to be more of these conversations.”

**V. Conclusion**

WIOA provides the SDWP with an opportunity to reimagine its role in providing leadership in job readiness and placement programs throughout San Diego County. The ideas expressed during the community conversations held during the summer of 2015 provide a roadmap for enhancing the programs and services offered by provider organizations and for ensuring that efforts and quality are consistent across all regions.

The major themes were as follows:

1. There is a need to increase marketing and promotion of the programs to both job seekers and employers. This should be accomplished through traditional media, social media and through employer networks such as chambers of commerce, local business improvement districts, etc.
2. The role of individual case management is critically important. Resources must be dedicated to ensuring quality one-on-one service whether that be in the form of well-trained paid staff or well-organized and trained volunteers. This includes the need to extend case management for the increased number of at-risk youth that WIOA mandates be served as well as to support people after they have found employment.
3. Technology services in the form of a centralized website, new computers and improved access to the internet must be addressed.
4. Adding soft skills training and increasing basic skills training will positively impact job seeker success. This view was articulated by all regions and all populations participating in the community conversations.
5. There are unrealized opportunities for greater collaboration among provider organizations and between provider organizations and agencies that provide wrap around social services. SDWP could use its standing in the community to play a leadership role helping to identify and connect those potential partners.

Finally, conversations like these should take place on a regular basis to ensure that constituent voices are heard, to monitor progress on the proposed changes, and to capture continuing needs.

**ATTACHMENT A: Protocol for the Guided Conversations:**

This document outlines a proposed protocol for conducting guided conversations with each target constituency: Funded Partners/Providers; Employers/Community Stakeholders; Youth and Adults.

**I.     Funded Partners/Providers/Community Stakeholders**

**Introduction to the conversation:** The purpose of this conversation today is to hear your ideas on workforce readiness and job placement strategies that could be put into place to serve the needs of youth, adults and employers in San Diego. We are interested in knowing what has worked well in the past and what hasn't been done that could be tried. We are particularly interested in hearing about ways in which services could be improved through greater collaboration. We are consultants who have been hired by the SDWP to bring objectivity to this process. We're not workforce experts; we are experts at facilitation and listening.

We are having these conversations with people like you throughout the county and will use your ideas to guide decision-making about workforce programs in San Diego. Our job is to listen carefully to what you have to say, make sure we have gotten it right, and to then put many of your ideas into a report that will be presented to a group called the Local Workforce Investment Board. That board will use your ideas to make decisions about how to improve services.

**Rules for the conversation:** You've come today because you have something to say and we want to begin this meeting by saying how much we appreciate you taking the time to be here. Our goal is for everyone in the room to be heard. To make that happen, we've created some simple rules for our conversation:

- One person speaks at a time
- Listen actively – respect others when they are talking
- No side conversations
- Do not interrupt when someone else is speaking
- Do not be afraid to respectfully disagree with another person, but refrain from personal attacks -- focus on ideas. Disagree without being disagreeable.
- Be as specific as possible and speak from personal experience so that you're talking about something that you experienced, not something that you heard
- Be positive, non-judgmental and open to new idea
- Please turn off your cell ringers too!

Is there anything anyone would like to add to these rules?

Please know too that at times we may cut you off if we hear that you are repeating yourself. We hope you won't be offended that we want to make sure that everyone is heard.

**Probing Questions for Funded Partners/Providers/Community Stakeholders:**

Let's begin by talking about your relationship with employers.

1. What has worked well in your interactions with employers?
2. What could be done to improve your impact with employers?
3. Are there things that could be done with new partners or collaborators that would increase the effectiveness of job preparedness and placement?
4. What kind of support do you need from SDWP to make any of these ideas happen?
5. What particular challenges, if any, do you see associated with this region?
6. What else do you want to say on this subject that we haven't covered?

Now let's move on to talk about serving youth:

1. What do you believe are the biggest job readiness obstacles facing youth?
2. What strategies work best for helping youth?
3. What hasn't been tried previously that we should explore?
4. What could be done better collaboratively that organizations have previously done on their own?
5. In what ways could SDWP help organizations better serve youth?
6. What haven't we touched on that is worth mentioning?

Now let's talk about adults:

1. What types of services and support do people need to prepare them to get and keep a job?
2. What strategies work best for helping adult populations?
3. What hasn't been done previously that we should explore?
4. What could be done better collaboratively that organizations have previously done on their own?
5. In what ways could SDWP help organizations better serve adults?
6. What else do you want to add that we haven't covered?

We have covered a lot of ground today! Of all of the ideas that we've discussed, which do you believe are most significant (provide participants with 5 sticky notes each and ask them to place them on the ideas that they think are most important).

## II. Employers

**Introduction to the conversation:** The purpose of this conversation today is to hear your ideas on what strategies and services could be put into place to best serve the needs of employers in order to improve the workforce readiness system for youth and adults in San Diego. We are interested in knowing what has worked well in the past and what hasn't been done that could be tried. We are particularly interested in hearing about ways in which services could be improved through greater collaboration. We are consultants who have been hired by the SDWP to bring objectivity to this process. We're not workforce experts; we are experts at facilitation and listening.

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### Probing Questions:

Let's start by thinking about the type of worker you need:

1. What kinds of skills are you looking for in workers?
2. Do you anticipate the types of skills you need from workers will change in the near future?

3. What kinds of skills development and training strategies have worked well for you in the past?
4. What differences, if any, do you see in training needs for youth vs. adults?
5. What hasn't been tried previously that is worth exploring?
6. What are the challenges you face attracting and retaining employees?

Let's talk about the workforce delivery system:

1. What organizations provide the most help to you with workforce referrals and training? Please talk specifically about how they are helpful.
2. How could the system work better for you?
3. What ideas do you have for incentivizing businesses to engage in worker training? What type of support do you wish was provided that isn't?
4. What could be done better collaboratively that organizations have previously done on their own?
5. What kind of support do you need from SDWP to make any of these ideas happen?
6. What haven't we touched on that is worth mentioning?

We have covered a lot of ground today! Of all of the ideas that we've discussed, which do you believe are most significant (provide participants with 5 sticky notes each and ask them to place them on the ideas that they think are most important).

### **III. Youth**

The purpose of this conversation today is to hear your ideas on what strategies and services could be used to help young people prepare for and get jobs in San Diego. We want to know what worked for you and what wasn't done well or at all that could have made your experience better. We are consultants who have been hired by the SDWP to bring objectivity to this process. We're not workforce experts; we are experts at facilitation and listening.

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**Probing Questions:**

1. Why did you participate in a jobs program?
2. What skills or education did you get?
3. Did that training help you land a job or move you forward on a career path?
4. Why did you choose to get those skills? What guided you in that direction?
5. What was the best thing about that experience?
6. Who helped you most?
7. What was the worst thing about that experience? What could have made it better?
8. If you were in charge, what would you have done to help someone like you?
9. What's the best way to reach kids with these types of programs?
10. What do you want to add that we haven't talked about already?

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#### IV. Adults

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## COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS WE NEED YOUR FEEDBACK!

The San Diego Workforce Partnership wants to hear your ideas  
 about job readiness and employment services in San Diego County.  
 Your feedback will be used to improve our services.  
 Please join your peers in one of the groups below.

**DATE:** Wednesday, July 22, 2015

**LOCATION:** East County Career Center

**TIME:** 1–2:30 p.m. (funded partners/  
community stakeholders)

Board Room  
924 East Main St.  
El Cajon, CA 92021

3–4 p.m. (employers)

5:30–6:30 p.m. (youth job seekers)

6:45–7:45 p.m. (adult job seekers)

RSVP suggested but not required.

Please contact Andrew Picard at [AndrewP@workforce.org](mailto:AndrewP@workforce.org) to RSVP or for questions.

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SDWP provides equal opportunity for its programs, services and employment. Auxiliary aids and services for individuals with disabilities are available upon request.

## ATTACHMENT C: Schedule

**FINAL Schedule for Community Conversations**

All locations will be scheduled as follows:

1:00 – 2:30pm	Providers/Community Partners
3:00 – 4:00pm	Employers
5:30 – 6:30pm	Youth
6:45 – 7:45pm	Adults

Region	Date	Location	Facilitator
North Co.	June 24 <sup>th</sup>	ResCare/North County Career Center. Oceanside Room	Crystal Trull
South Co.	July 1 <sup>st</sup>	South County Career Center. Cabrillo Room	Pat Libby
Metro area	July 9	SDWP. Julie Benedict Room	Pat Libby
East Co.	July 22	East County Career Center. Board Room	Crystal Trull