



# Legislative Priorities

## 2017



NASWA's advocacy agenda supports the states' efforts for ensuring the workforce system meets employers' needs for a qualified workforce and promotes high-quality employment and careers for workers.

# Key Fiscal Issues

## • Ensure Sufficient, Flexible Workforce Development Investment

### Provide no less than current investment levels for workforce and training programs.

Now is the time to invest, not divest, in the success of the public workforce system. States are in the midst of implementing the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) with collaboration and innovation, including demand-driven training, apprenticeships, and career pathways, which will close skills gaps for employers and help workers increase their earnings.

- However, these successful results are endangered due to continued reduced investment. WIOA formula programs alone were cut by \$585 million, in actual dollars, since 2001 (a 20% reduction and a time of historically low unemployment).
- Workforce agencies today are faced with persistent long-term unemployment and any further reductions will detrimentally impact our ability to assist both jobseekers and employers under the enhanced programmatic services mandated by WIOA.

WIOA employment & training programs assisted 7.3 million individuals over the last program year, and Employment Services (Wagner-Peyser) programs assisted an additional 14.1 million jobseekers.

In 2016, 64% of WIOA participants gained employment, including 77% of adult participants and 82% of dislocated workers who received training services. In addition, the Employment Services programs placed 62% of jobseekers in employment with 84% staying in those positions 6+ months.

### Maintain investment for governor's statewide needs at 15%.

Both the WIOA mandate and the current House and Senate bills include states receiving 15% of WIOA formula investment, which is essential to ensuring states have the capacity to implement effective programs to meet statewide and regional employer demands for a high-quality workforce.

### Increase flexibility and programmatic alignment for maximum utilization of investment.

Provide states enhanced flexibility between funding streams and support coordination among the federal/state programs to accelerate jobseekers' hiring, drive innovative solutions, address employer needs, and coordinate service delivery, while maximizing the return on taxpayer dollars.

## • Reform Unemployment Insurance (UI)

### Help states improve the integrity of the Unemployment Insurance program.

- Encourage further investment in integrity activities by permitting states to use up to 5% of recovered claimant overpayments and additional employer contributions collected to fight fraud.
- Invest in the Unemployment Insurance Integrity Center at a minimum of \$3 million annually to continue efforts toward eliminating UI fraud.

### Support Unemployment Insurance Programming.

Investment in UI administration is at a 30-year low, and serious disruption in the delivery of UI benefits is at risk in the next economic downturn.

- Increase the annual state UI Administrative base allocation by 25% at a minimum, while holding the Average Weekly Insured Unemployment (AWIU) base workload constant, to meet employer and claimant expectations for acceptable customer service.
- Provide a minimum investment level of at least \$300 million/year to modernize antiquated state UI IT systems and maintain current systems.
- Adjust the set aside for UI Contingency investment to \$28 million annually (inflation adjustment).



- **Expand Support for Reemployment Services and Apprenticeships**

**Invest in Reemployment Services programming at no less than \$185 million**

Reemployment services have a proven track record of accelerating UI beneficiaries' return to work, with the additional benefit of reducing rates of unemployment insurance payments. States should be provided additional flexibility with this investment to enhance coordination between unemployment insurance programs and other workforce programs to expedite jobseekers' hiring.

- Core components of reemployment services include job search tools, early intervention services, career guidance, job referrals, and training for UI claimants.

**Invest in Apprenticeships at no less than \$100 million**

States are expanding the utilization of innovative apprenticeship programming to train workers in a host of demand industries to better meet employer needs. Federal apprenticeship grants are a core component of this effort, which allow workers to earn a paycheck while acquiring in demand skills and credentials.

## Key Authorizing Issues

- **Safeguard Veterans Programs**

**Maintain the vital role of veterans training programs in the workforce development system.**

The workforce development system is best able to align and integrate unemployment services and avoid duplication of federal job training, education, and human resource programs serving veterans (given the significant barriers they face with workforce re-entry). This past year, 60% of veterans gained employment.

- NASWA opposes bills introduced that would separate these critical programs from the U.S. DOL.

- **Ensure Successful WIOA Implementation**

**Promote the successful connection of education, vocational rehabilitation and human services programs to WIOA.**

NASWA encourages Congress to continue its strong engagement with the federal agencies of jurisdiction in WIOA implementation. This will ensure coordinated alignment between the workforce development programs and a range of partner programs, including career and technical education, higher education, adult basic education, vocational rehabilitation, TANF and other human service programs, that lead to better employment and career advancement outcomes.

**Eliminate impediments to real-time, integrated state data sharing.**

NASWA supports high-quality program and labor market information, a powerful public labor exchange, utilization of workforce technologies, integrating cross-agency data, and opportunities for state workforce agencies to be learning organizations engaging in data analysis and program evaluation to provide better data-driven outcomes for employers and workers.

Currently, dedicated funding is not available for these important activities. States will continue to be challenged in providing high-quality data and integrated access for employers and job seekers.

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## About NASWA

The National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) represents the 50 state and territory workforce agencies, which oversee the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, employment services, unemployment insurance, employment statistics and labor market and workforce information programming. NASWA delivers policy expertise on these issues.

NASWA's Board of Directors and membership adopted the association's federal legislative priorities, which shape advocacy efforts on behalf of state workforce agencies.

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