California Innovation Corridor

California Workforce Association

WIB Benchmarking Survey
Completed between August 2006 and October 2006

Background: The WIRED Collaboratory: Funded by the US Department of Labor's WIRED initiative and the California Innovation Corridor, the intent and design of this survey is to establish a benchmark for the California Workforce Association's Collaboratory project. The survey results will help identify how deeply and in what manner Local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) are engaged in "transformative" or "innovative" practices, specifically for implementing demand-driven responses for talent development responsive to 21st Century labor markets.

Supported by this information, the Collaboratory project goal is to create a sustainable, interactive learning community among WIBs, business, education, workforce and economic development professionals. Each of these stakeholders will thus be better informed and aligned for delivering innovative practices to advance the talent development essential to California's economic competitiveness.

The Survey: We asked the 50 California Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs)—whether or not they are situated within the geographic boundaries of the California Innovation Corridor (CIC) or are identified as WIRED partners—to complete the survey. We have an 82 percent response rate, or a total of 41 of the state's 50 WIBs. At the start of the survey process we identified 30 responses as the minimum. Although we desired 100 percent participation, and we tried over the course of several months to achieve a 100 percent response, we believe that at this point, additional answers to the survey will be "contaminated" by the work that we have been doing with the WIBs, and the remaining responses would not accurately reflect a true beginning benchmark.

California's Workforce Investment Boards: In each of the 50 local workforce areas, there is a WIB, a private-sector led Board that develops policy, provides program oversight and leadership over workforce issues and programs in their labor markets. Each WIB has an Executive Director, housed in an administrative agency, which directs staff and provides support to the Board. This survey was sent to the Executive Directors of each WIB, and when referring to WIBs in this report, we are using the Executive Directors' responses to the survey.

There are 25 WIBs within the physical geography of the California Innovation Corridor, starting on the northern end at Alameda County, extending south through Santa Clara County and the Silicon Valley and including all of the coastal counties from Santa Cruz to San Diego, and inland from the Los Angeles Basin to include Kern County and the Inland Empire. These 25 WIBs are organized in a variety of ways—eleven are county-based, 13 are based in cities or consortia of cities, and one is a city-county partnership. Twenty of the 25 WIBs within the Corridor responded to the survey.

These WIBs also have an extremely wide variety of affiliations for staffing and administrative support. They range from being housed in city or county departments of economic development, community development and human services or welfare, standing as a separate government department, as part of a Joint Powers Authority, and as private non-profits. This diversity reflects the richness of experience and leadership within the workforce community and adds to the complexity of assessing the current state of workforce services.

WIRED Engagement: When asked to describe their participation in the WIRED project, WIBs answering the survey fell into four categories: not in the Corridor, in the Corridor but not directly involved, a partner (no funding but listed in the grant), and a funded partner. The chart to the left displays the repondents' relationship to the WIRED grant.

WIbs and CIC

a funded partner
18%

a partner (no funding but listed in the grant)
8%

in the "Corridor" but not involved
21%

not in the "Corridor"
53%
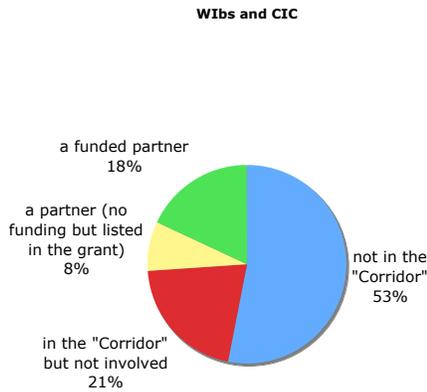
The remainder of this report describes the questions and answers in the survey, and includes additional comments based on our experience in implementing the WIRED Collaboratory to date. We have focused on the talent development and retention aspects of the WIRED grant, which are the most relevant to WIBs and the work they do.

To gain perspective on initial engagement, we described one of the key goals of California's WIRED grant as follows: **Accelerate development of a highly skilled 21st Century talent pool by creating pilot projects and activities capable of supporting a continuum of math, science and engineering education (K-U), and lifelong learning relevant to the 21st Century worker.** We asked respondents to agree or disagree with the following statements in relation to this goal.

(Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of total respondents selecting the option.)	Strongly disagree							Strongly agree
• No one in our labor market is working on this	10	4	6	6	5	4	0	2
	27%	11%	16%	16%	14%	11%	0%	5%
• There are some organizations working on this but it is not systematic	2	5	1	5	10	7	4	2
	6%	14%	3%	14%	28%	19%	11%	6%
• There are a set of players working on this in an organized way	4	5	6	5	8	4	4	1
	11%	14%	16%	14%	22%	11%	11%	3%
• This goal is possible within three years	3	3	6	4	5	9	3	5
	8%	8%	16%	11%	13%	24%	8%	13%
• Our WIB would be interested in working on this	1	0	0	0	1	7	13	16
	3%	0%	0%	0%	3%	18%	34%	42%

As displayed in the chart on the preceding page, there is extensive engagement by Local Workforce Boards on issues pertaining to 21st Century talent development. Levels of engagement, however, vary quite widely. For example, responses to the statement "There are some organizations working on this but it is not systematic" are arrayed on a bell curve, suggesting that "systematic work" on this subject is not wholly or deeply embedded throughout the state. It is apparently the opinion of WIB Directors that, for the most part, there is not an organized approach to addressing these issues in local communities. More positively, we were surprised and pleased to see that many respondents believe this goal is possible within three years. We are further encouraged by the strong level of agreement (94% in agreement or strong agreement) on the statement "Our WIB would be interested in working on this," with only one WIB stating they would *not* be interested.

Community Partnerships: We believe that if communities can indeed respond to the WIRED goals in the next few years, that it will only be through strong relationships of all organizations involved in workforce development, economic development, and education. Interested in understanding and benchmarking relationships among WIBs and other systems, we asked respondents **to assess the strength of their current partnerships with other agencies** by picking which most closely describe their relationships. Six pie-charts follow, displaying the levels of participation of WIBs with several different partner institutions.

Relationship with Economic Development

don't even talk
know each other
good relationship
do some work together
work together all the time

Local Chambers of Commerce

don't even talk
know each other
good relationship
do some work together
work together all the time
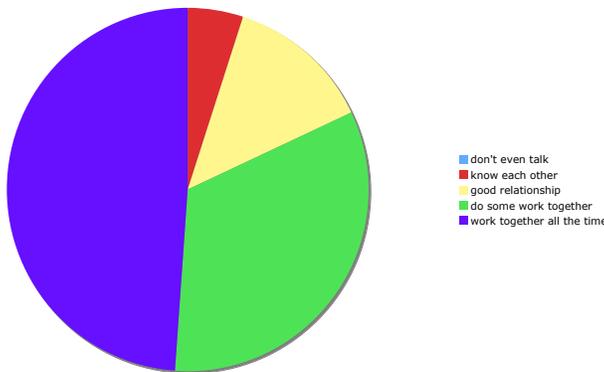
In these first two charts, relative to partnerships with Economic Development and Chambers of Commerce, we see extremely high levels of familiarity and partnership for both, with much higher levels for WIBs "working together all the time" with economic development.

This more intensive engagement with economic development may reflect that WIBs are becoming more focused on business through programmatic partnerships, with such programs more commonly the province of economic development organizations than chambers. That is, WIBs may be finding relatively more familiar common ground with economic development.

While we see WIBs becoming more engaged with business generally, the pathways to partnership with chambers are less clear. As WIBs become more engaged and comfortable with policy and advocacy, we may see greater indications of "working together."
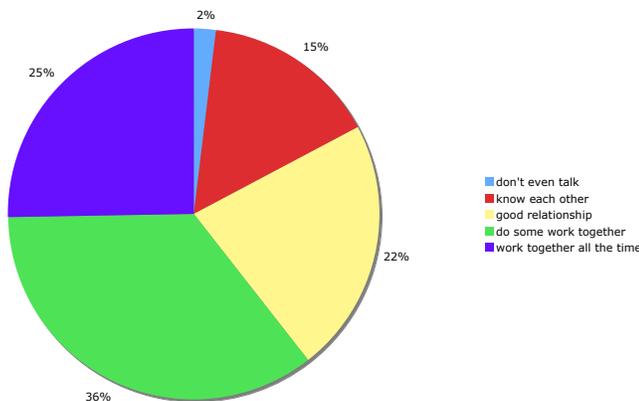
The three charts on this page address WIB partnerships with education. As indicated by the responses, there is a wide variety in the nature and depth of relationships with the different levels of education institutions.

Though not indicated specifically, it is likely that the higher response for "working together all of the time" with community colleges represents a growing trend. Part of this is by the interest of WIBs; some certainly owes to the growing emphasis by many community colleges on career and technical education. We expect this high level of engagement to grow even more over the life of the WIRED grant and is in fact a formally adopted priority of the WIB Directors through CWA.

Somewhat surprising is the relatively high level of only "know each other" and "good relationship" with K-12, particularly given the growing level of concern expressed by business over what it perceives as K-12's failure to prepare the workforce. It appears there will be some benefit from developing and sharing models to improve K-12 engagement.

It is not surprising that the lowest levels of "working together" are seen for four year colleges and universities. Given past practice among WIBs—tied to service priorities for disadvantaged populations, for seeking short term outcomes that return workers to the labor market, and for lack of revenue—there is neither a long nor deep tradition of partnership. As there is a shifting emphasis in workforce systems, however, to a broader emphasis on talent development and filling worker pipelines at all levels, we expect this will change. A priority of the Collaboratory is to help advance such transformation.

Community Colleges

Pie chart legend:
- don't even talk
- know each other
- good relationship
- do some work together
- work together all the time

0%, 2%, 12%, 30%, 56%

K-12 Education

Pie chart legend:
- don't even talk
- know each other
- good relationship
- do some work together
- work together all the time

2%, 12%, 28%, 33%, 25%
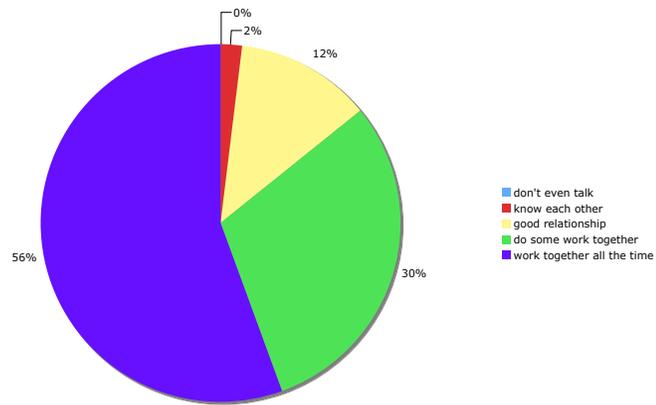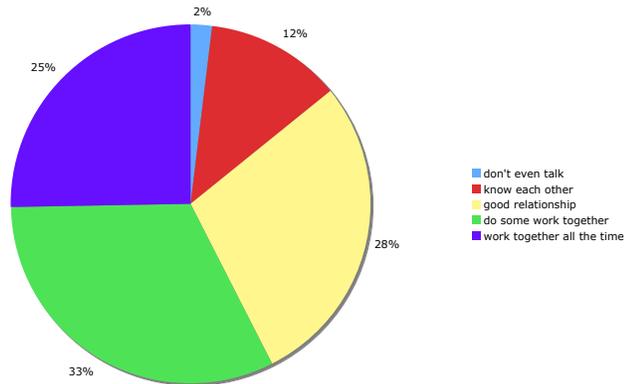
Four Year Colleges & Universities

Pie chart legend:
- don't even talk
- know each other
- good relationship
- do some work together
- work together all the time

5%, 21%, 53%, 8%, 13%

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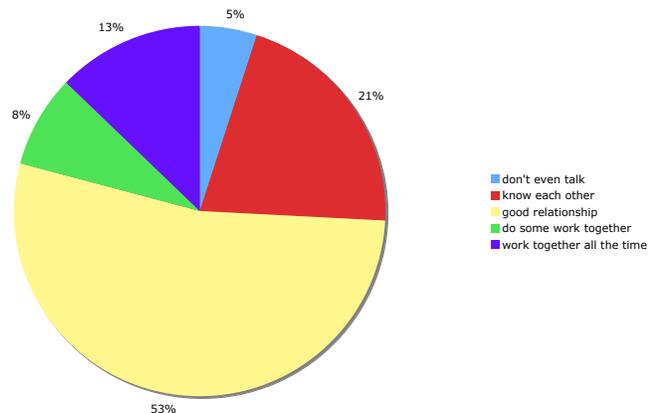
Regional Organizations: Councils of Governments, Regional Non-Profits

- don't even talk
- know each other
- good relationship
- do some work together
- work together all the time

10%
12%
22%
22%
34%
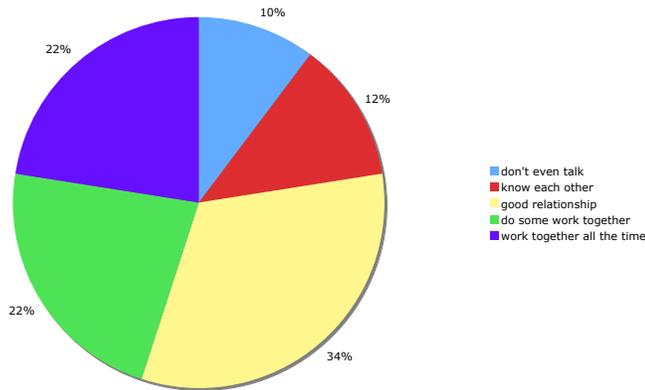
The responses on "regional organizations" are the most evenly divided among the several types of partners. Additional work is in order to tease out more detail—particularly owing to the kind of diversity that may exist within the category of "regional organizations"—but its urgency for WIBs is real as regional solutions to business needs and labor market deficiencies become more prevalent.

In summary on partnerships, WIBs have the most active and deepest relationships with economic development agencies and community colleges. There are many examples of strong working partnerships between WIBs and these two systems. The WIRED Collaboratory project will advance awareness among all partners of innovative and transformative best practices.

Systems that need the most relationship building are institutions of higher education and regional organizations. WIBs will need new models to help implement such transformation. The Collaboratory project will seek to provide these models and to demonstrate the benefit of the partnerships where they make the best sense for all parties.

Technical Workers, Generally: We asked the WIB Directors about whether their WIB members talk about technical workers, and the current and future needs of employers. Ten percent said they "rarely talked about the need for technical workers," 52 percent said they "talked often about this need," and 38 percent said "they talked about this issue all the time."

In response to the statement "Our WIB has actually *funded* projects or training that address the current and/or future needs of employers for more technical workers," as displayed below 77% answered yes and 23% answered no.

Funding Projects for Tech Workers


- Yes
- No

23%
77%
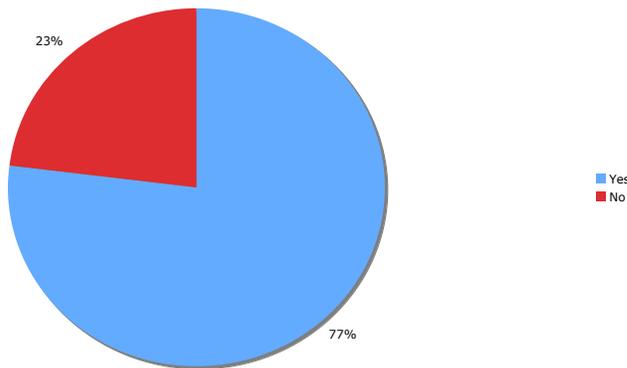
In the comment section to the technical worker investment survey question, we also recorded the following:

- Only one that I recall.
- In manufacturing and nursing.
- Rapid Response Special Project Lay-off aversion study.
- Especially when H1B was alive and well.
- Biotech and quality control training.
- Biotech and Healthcare.
- If technical workers include the healthcare field, then the answer is yes.
- Our County has formed a committee to address these needs.
- Numerous employer driven programs.
- Licensed health care occupations.
- We've operated H-1B Tech Skills grants for the last five years and we've worked with over 12 companies who have trained over 1000 incumbent workers during the grant/s period.
- Our labor market does not have any technology-based employers yet they employ workers that require technical skills.

Though too varied to draw any single conclusion, the total survey responses relative to technical training demonstrate both interest and investment. One pattern evidenced by the comments is a concentration on nursing and biotechnology training. There may be a correlation between these responses and the availability of state and federal discretionary funding concentrated in these areas. This and the two references to H-1B funds might foreshadow two tentative conclusions we'll find reinforced below. One, that WIBs have and must practice considerable creativity in finding resources to meet their needs, and two, that training investments are dangerously dependent on both disappearing and discretionary resources. Helping WIBs access needed training and talent development resources is a priority of the WIRED Collaboratory.

Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM), More Specifically: We asked WIBs: *"Are you addressing any STEM issues either through policy, funding or initiatives?"* Interestingly, 45 percent of the respondents did not know the term STEM. Although many clarified later that they were addressing these issues, the term STEM, which is currently the term of art used by those focusing on high tech industries, was new to almost half the WIB directors.
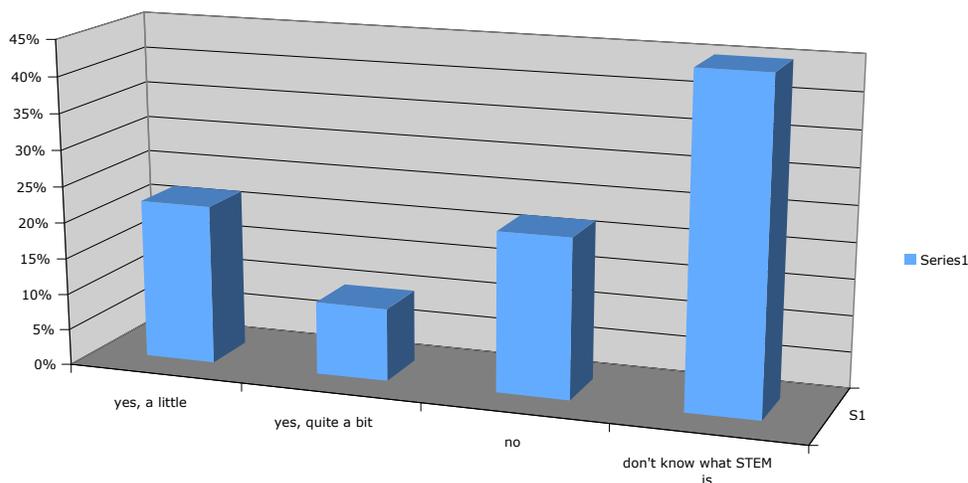
Linking Strategy to Business Leadership:

Throughout California and the nation, there is a scale of WIBs that, on one end, are led by the Private Sector, and who are therefore truly "demand-driven," and those, on the other, that are run by government agencies. The common assumption is that WIBs which are led more by the business community will be more responsive to their needs, and, therefore, the needs of the community.

We asked WIB Directors to indicate the extent to which their work is initiated and controlled by the WIB versus the organization in which they are housed and to which they report administratively (county government, welfare department, city structure, etc.). As displayed below, the responses are concentrated more toward the "WIB directed" end of the scale, but there are several—approximately one-fifth—that indicated their work is more defined by an administrative agency.
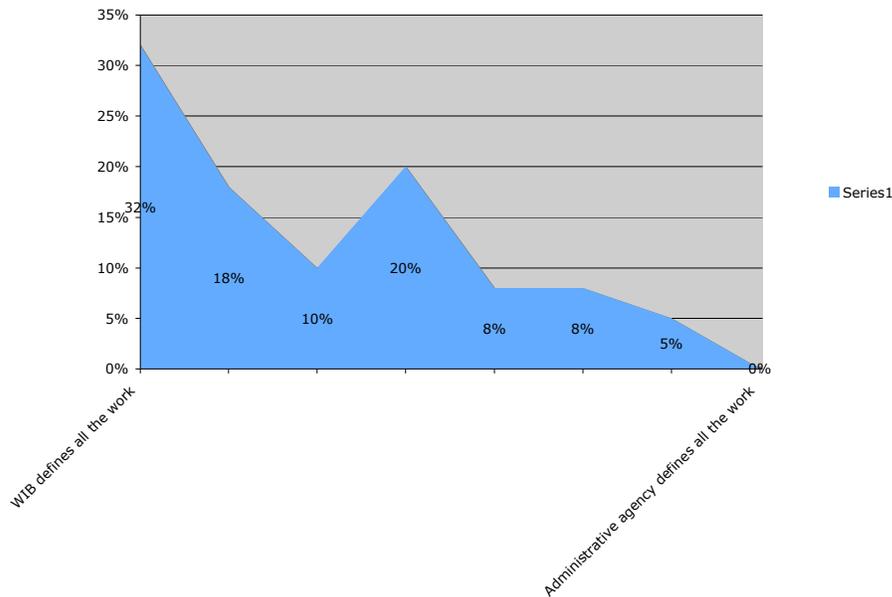
When asked, *"on a scale that has WIA oversight on one end and community leadership on the other, our WIB is focused on,"* it is encouraging to note that WIBs again answered with a preponderance of responses on the community leadership end of the scale:
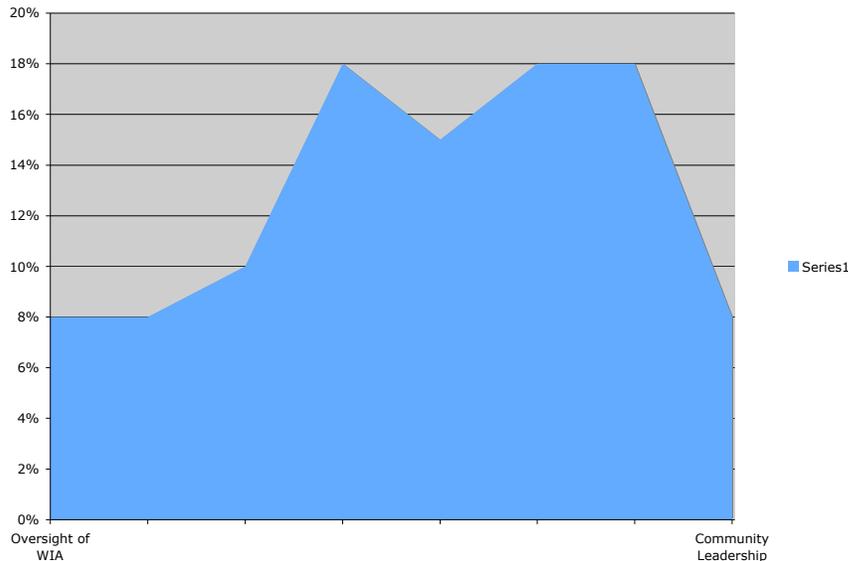
Progress toward Demand Driven Approaches: In order better to assess in more detail what manner WIBs are moving toward and committed to demand-driven approaches, we asked a series of questions, each with the responses displayed in the following:

Please assess the progress of your organization in making the shift to a demand-driven approach.	Just starting				Strongly agree
• We have named the employer as primary customer	5%	10%	26%	26%	33%
• We fund business services	10%	10%	10%	18%	52%
• All of our services are demand-driven	10%	15%	18%	42%	15%
• We provide guidance to the One-Stop to focus on employers	10%	10%	12%	30%	38%
• We fund customized training for employers	26%	15%	15%	21%	23%
• We have a set of performance measures for business services	42%	8%	18%	15%	18%

The responses to these questions indicate strong if not universal leanings toward a demand-driven approach. The preponderance of respondents identified business as the primary customer and more than half "strongly agree" that they have committed funding for business services.

Responses are spread almost evenly across the range, however, from "just starting" to "strongly agreeing," on the question of whether "all" services are demand driven. Given the diversity of services offered by WIBs—and the diversity of priority client populations—this is hardly surprising and may not represent slow movement but rather just this diversity.

An area that appears to call for more inquiry and analysis is whether WIBS "provide guidance to One-Stops to focus on employers." Survey responses indicate a strong 68% between "agree" and "strongly agree," but more detail on what form this guidance takes may prove instructive.

While more than 50% "strongly agree" that they fund business services, the level of investment more specifically for "customized training for employers" is less by half. Fully 26% responded that they are only "just starting," the lowest level of engagement the survey instrument provided. The total distribution of responses is spread almost evenly across the array. It is worth noting that customized training has been a more regulated activity under WIA than other service options, and revenues in recent years have declined precipitously for most WIBs, with training unfortunately bearing the brunt of the cuts. Greater investment in customized training may represent movement toward a demand-driven system, but the measure may be secondary to the availability of revenue.

The last question above identifies that few WIBs have followed their business services investments with *performance measures*. This may not be surprising given that most job training measures track job-seeker outcomes, not business. Only customer satisfaction is required for tracking business outcomes, and in California it is managed at the state, not local level. As "what we do" is heavily influenced by "what we measure," until business services are more intensively tracked we will not likely see more rapid movement or deep-seated commitment to a demand-driven agenda.

Status on Community Leadership: Further toward assessing the role of WIBs in community leadership, we asked the following questions:

Our WIB is in the following phase in regard to these activities:					
(The top number is the count of respondents; the bottom % is the percent of total.)	Not on WIB's agenda	Haven't done this	In planning stages	Just starting	Do this regularly
• WIB sponsored employer events	1 2%	5 12%	3 8%	11 28%	20 50%
• Local workforce summits around particular issues	1 2%	8 20%	6 15%	10 25%	15 38%
• Creation of new community task forces to look at local workforce issues	5 13%	7 18%	6 15%	9 23%	12 31%
• Sponsorship of community focus groups	7 18%	6 15%	5 13%	9 23%	12 31%
• Release of labor market studies and other state of the workforce reports	1 3%	6 15%	7 18%	4 10%	21 54%
• Relevant media and marketing events that highlight workforce issues activities & events	2 5%	6 15%	9 22%	9 22%	14 35%
• Building new community partnerships	0 0%	1 2%	6 15%	11 28%	22 55%
• New resource sharing	3 8%	2 5%	12 32%	10 26%	11 29%
• New policies adopted by outside organizations as a result of WIBs actions	4 10%	16 40%	10 25%	6 15%	4 10%
• Better alignment or mobilization of community resources	2 5%	7 18%	13 32%	7 18%	11 28%
• Joint planning and marketing	2 5%	5 13%	16 41%	6 15%	10 26%

It is evident that a majority of respondents have either started or regularly engage in a variety of expressions of community leadership. Particularly strong responses are recorded for "WIB sponsored employer events" (78% started or doing regularly), "release of labor market studies and other reports" (64% started or doing regularly), and "building new partnerships" (83% started or doing regularly). Slightly lower but still high levels of engagement are reported for producing local workforce summits, creation of task forces on local workforce issues, and promoting relevant media and marketing events.

Given on-going concerns about adequate resources, there appears to be room for progress relative to "new resource sharing." A surprisingly high 32% reported they are only in the planning stages and 13% responded, in total, that it's not on the WIBs agenda or they haven't done any.

There is also a wide mix of responses to engagement in "joint planning and marketing," and "better alignment and mobilization of community resources," with the largest percentage of respondents to these questions (41% and 32%, respectively) indicating they are in the planning stages. These numbers may only move more toward the "doing regularly" stage when we also see multi-lateral improvements in partnership relations and development.

Implementing a Vision for Workforce Transformation: The WIRED grant states that transformation of the system would result in: Responsive, flexible education/workforce systems, which anticipate and respond to global market changes, workforce needs with continuity across systems. We asked respondents an open-ended question on what they need to help contribute to this vision. They answered as follows:

1. Additional, dedicated, adequate stream(s) of funding, which provide maximum flexibility to engage in activities, and are not necessarily driven by client service performance measures.
2. Legislative leadership at the state and federal levels, which will enable and facilitate continuity across systems.
3. Information systems that take data collection to another level. We lack technology that can be used to inform multiple systems of what is discovered about business needs and skill gaps in such a way that they can use it to design plans to respond. A technology based information system that can crosscut disciplines...economic development, workforce and education is critical.
4. Leadership from LOCAL and STATE elected officials and department heads. We need our local entities to have motivation for working together and dropping turf issues. Even after all these years, turf is still alive and kicking. Breaking down these walls is tough, but if the right leadership DEMANDS it, people will act.
5. Additional strong business (private sector) participation.
6. We need greater emphasis on technology and technical careers at the junior high and high school level. Higher level of local training, i.e. engineering.
7. More awareness of local and global work opportunities.
8. More Board capacity building support including a sponsored and proven trainer that would come to the local jurisdiction with specific examples and strategies that go deeper than "you must link with economic development" Support to allow board members to travel. With our budgets cut in half over the last few years travel and training has been non-existent.
9. Buy-in and shared understanding across systems.

10. Cohesive Federal and State policy that fosters collaboration among diverse systems within the established One-Stop system.
11. Practical examples of how this has been done in other areas. Specific projects and how those were developed.
12. Funds for implementation.
13. Funding.
14. State to actually adopt framework around this as well, and also more information on the how to's... Industry cluster work, etc....
15. Money.
16. Funds to make it happen as my staff are really stretched.
17. Our WIB would greatly benefit from a couple of guest presentations to talk about "best practices" now in motion around the State, in order to see what is happening elsewhere.
18. Cross system waiver to try pilots to address the barriers to the vision.
19. Resources available from any part of the system.
20. A facilitator to help coordinate the effort.
21. Improved labor market information, real time (~1 week) if possible, i.e. which companies are hiring, for what positions, in summarized format.
22. More universal enlightened (self-) interest of employers that "workforce matters."
23. Less bureaucracy.
24. Even simpler performance measures.
25. Clearer focus out of D.C. on use of WIA funds for business services.
26. Best practices information--more than just California. Easy access to information and contact information.
27. Less categorical funding, fewer restrictions on Rapid Response funding.
28. Funding.
29. We must be agile and fast acting. We can do this on the policy side already, but we have difficulty in mobilizing the funds quickly. This problem is caused by too much money being caught up in infrastructure. This can be helped with strong and consistent outside pressure to reduce overhead costs and through local efficiency measures being imposed in performance.

Barriers to Achieving the Vision: We also asked "what are the main barriers to achieving this vision for your organization? We know you need more money, but what beyond that? We are particularly interested in barriers that we might be able to address. Be as specific as possible!"

1. Again, leadership at the state and federal levels, behind which local WIBs can mobilize community resources and stakeholders. "Teeth," supported by legislation and regulation, in the Workforce Investment Act, which induce all mandatory members of the One-Stop system locally to be serious partners.
2. Perhaps there is work that could be done to facilitate the move of WIBs from oversight to community leadership via broad-based policy work. We seem to struggle with local politics and some regional or state policy framework might assist in managing this. Capacity building of boards to develop the private sector leadership would be helpful. Our private sector members have some frustration with working through public education institutions, but for the system to be developed effectively their ability to work in a transformational capacity with these institutions will be critical. Facilitated regional meetings of education, economic development and WIBS would be useful, specifically to encourage support for those initiatives that have transformational potential.

3. The understanding that the continuum from education, to workforce/economic development, and to the world of work beyond are all connected and one system cannot be ultimately successful reaching this vision without the others. We need to develop understanding among partners to reduce competitiveness and increase support for each other. Need to also increase understanding of the K-12 system that their curriculum is very important and it needs to be embedded in career development.

4. A main barrier that we have observed is the difficulty in effectively coordinating with all of the various entities representing the many elements of a workforce system and the willingness for these entities to share information, resources and permit encroachment on traditionally well-entrenched turfs. This trust and cooperation among these entities is critical in ensuring success, in my opinion. We have seen major progress in cooperation between education (county and city school districts, colleges and universities), other training agencies (and other agencies with training components, i.e. HSS) and economic development and the WIB, although working with the social service organizations requires a lot more work.

5. Competing demands on education systems and training capacity especially at secondary level. Not knowing more about future needs and providing timely training. Lack of educated and skilled workforce to meet current and future needs.

6. Bring the trainer to us. Facilitate more regional partnerships in the model of WIRED.

7. Again leadership and buy-in across systems so that work is done on a local level but there is regional and "corridor" wide commitment to achieving the goals in leadership positions.

8. Separate and diverse policy, lack of communication, lack of State leadership to promote a cohesive system.

9. Lack of time; there is simply so much to be done and not enough time to do it all.

10. Geographic location is a political barrier for receiving support.

11. Coordination at all levels Federal, State and local... We all talk about it but it seems that not a lot happens, or if it is we are not highlighting it enough. True partnerships that works, etc. Also the State actually having a vision around this and help coordinate it.

12. It is about stability of appropriate resources; hard to get traction on the systemic change piece when you may be well down the road of being out of business.

13. Having partners who are also willing to join forces.

14. Money is secondary. We do not have good leadership in a larger view of things and the business side of the WIB is not exerting itself to the potential that is there.

15. Time.

16. Connecting Labor Market information that is real time would be helpful.

17. I believe that we can get our partners in education on board with the vision. It's a matter of being able to devote staff time to coordinating the initial meetings and seeing implementation through to completion.

18. Information and better systems.

19. Businesses/employers in all sectors need to see the importance of workforce development efforts.

20. The "reciprocity in the workplace" equation (i.e. the basic employee-employer contract) needs to be updated/changed, to address a lack of motivation by many of today's workers, especially new entrants.

21. Engagement of Private Sector and Elected Officials.

22. Let some of the funding be used for economic development, i.e., proactive funding, rather than reactive — such as rapid response funding

23. Collaboration exists between WIB and education agencies, including colleges. Funding would be the key issue.

24. As stated previously, funding agility!

25. Policy changes in K-12, CC's to support short term vocational training.

Anything Else? Finally, we asked survey respondents to add anything else that would be helpful for us to know as we begin this work.

1.   We have observed that it is essential for businesses to engage in the process since they are the ultimate beneficiaries (or at least the intended recipients) of workforce services. A difficulty is that we need to specifically articulate the value of the various workforce services to business, which is challenging if they are not at the table, so to speak...not just participation as WIB members, but as employers willing to communicate their needs to the workforce system because they believe (or know) they will receive (or are receiving) value-added benefit from our system.
2.   How can we be included in the WIRED grant and help achieve the vision and goals?
3.   Good Luck.
4.   Why are we completing this survey when our WIB is not part of the funded grant?
5.   The question on demand-driven was either/or for business/jobseeker...one can be demand-driven as to customers' requirements and focus on both with some level of equity.
6.   I sense we are an anomaly, or at least I hope we are. Happy to discuss further. We aren't in good shape.
7.   Don't forget the needed soft skills for tomorrow's workers. This remains the absolute #1 issue with employers today. Gifted individuals with STEM skills, who do not know how to work, are near useless to employers.
8.   Our WIB is very motivated and willing to set up additional committees to address these issues; however, money to fund these programs is always a barrier to achieving goals set.
9.   Give regional $ (to all WIBs in a region) and then base future allocations on performance only (no one WIB receives $).
10.   Consortiums tend to move slowly with one partner holding up when they don't see the same urgency and its easier to move with the existing bureaucracy.
11.   I think the most critical first step is to translate the broad vision of the WIRED into an easily understood format and in some way show the relevance to various regions, in spite of their differences.

Summary: As is the case with interpreting all survey responses, it is important to keep in mind that this is a snapshot. Perceptions, priorities and relationships naturally change over time. Recognizing that change is part of the natural course, it is the goal of WIRED and this Collaboratory project to help accelerate change in the right direction. There is no single course, but our general movement is toward innovation in supporting development of a highly skilled 21st Century talent pool. It is our belief that success is far more likely as we inform our work through an interactive learning community among WIBs, business and partner organizations.

This survey describes our current state and helps define where the sharing of best practices and innovative strategies are most necessary and will have the greatest impact. Following is our preliminary summary of what we have learned so far:

•   WIBs are strongly supportive of the WIRED/California Innovation Corridor goal for developing a highly skilled 21st Century talent pool, by creating projects supporting a continuum of math, science and engineering education and lifelong learning relevant to the 21st Century worker. Fully 94% of respondents stated agreement or strong agreement that their WIBs would be interested in working on this.

- While a moderately high percentage believe it is possible to meet this goal in three years, WIBs are not so confident that local players are working systematically on WIRED priorities. Only twenty-five percent of respondents expressed agreement or strong agreement that local areas are addressing these issues in an organized way. There is opportunity for WIBs to exercise more leadership in planning and organizing their communities.

- The question of how well organized communities are on workforce issues may relate directly to information in the survey on community partnerships. Survey responses indicate strong partnerships, particularly with economic development and community colleges, reflecting current trends toward engaging the business community and improving both worker and business access to training resources. This represents a solid foundation upon which WIBs might build continuing success in partnership development and organizing.

- Further on partnerships, however, the survey data tells us that there is considerable work to be done toward improving WIB partnership with K-12, with four year colleges and universities and with regional organizations. Work on this latter may prove particularly opportune as contemporary policy and strategy innovations increasingly emphasize regional engagement, whether by industry sector or cluster, by other defined labor market or infrastructure problems and goals, or sometimes even by governance. The Collaboratory project will seek to provide innovative models of partnership for each of these areas.

- It is evident that WIBs are demonstrating both interest and investment for development of technology workers. As noted above in the body of this report, WIBs exercise considerable creativity in finding resources to meet their needs, particularly by accessing discretionary funding.

- Further on training, it is evident that investments are at enormous risk owing to a lack of financial resources. Helping WIBs access needed training and talent development resources is a priority of the WIRED Collaboratory.

- On governance and leadership orientation, WIBs are more predominantly clustered on the WIB and business-led, demand-driven side of the scale. More specifically, 59% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they have identified business as the primary customer and 70% agree or strongly agree that they have committed funding for business services. It is also evident, however, that the tug of administrative requirements—whether through governance or funding and compliance requirements—remains strong.

- WIBs are widely engaged in various aspects of community leadership. Particularly strong responses are recorded for "WIB sponsored employer events" (78% started or doing regularly), "release of labor market studies and other reports" (64% started or doing regularly), and "building new partnerships" (83% started or doing regularly). Again, there is a solid foundation here on which to build.

- Given on-going concerns about adequate resources, there appears to be room for progress relative to "new resource sharing." A surprisingly high 32% of WIBs reported they are only in the planning stages and 13% responded, in total, that it's not on the WIBs agenda or they haven't done any. Support for WIBs on resource sharing has long been a priority and will gain new attention here forward.

- There is also a wide mix of responses to such important WIB functions as engagement in "joint planning and marketing" and "better alignment and mobilization of community resources," with the largest percentage of respondents to these questions (41% and 32%, respectively) indicating they are in the planning stages. These numbers may only move more toward the "doing regularly" stage when we also see multi-lateral improvements in partnership relations and development. Again, a priority of the Collaboratory project is to advance innovative best practices that may assist in these areas.

- Finally, the numeric survey data is reinforced by the open-ended comments included in pages 10 through 13 above. Here we see numerous comments on the difficulty of managing competing priorities generated by complex labor market conditions, of the continuing work and energy necessary to induce engagement and to break down turf issues between organizations and vested interests, and the lack of time and funding necessary to meet all objectives. WIBs express concern about a lack of strong and supportive guidance at the state and federal levels and worry, too, that local leaders and business are not adequately aware of how critical to economic success is workforce development. Not to be deterred, however, WIBs consistently express willingness to take on new challenges. Engagement of the WIRED initiative is further evidence of this inclination.

Conclusion: What is certain from this benchmarking survey is that WIBs are motivated to engage in the WIRED agenda. Barriers to progress include a lack of clear models and best practices and, especially, a lack of financial resources. The Collaboratory project will seek to provide innovative best practice resources to support WIBs in their movement toward improved targeting of program investment and toward ever more dynamic leadership in their communities.

Relative to financial resources, the issue might best be approached by a reinvigorated commitment to accessing new resources and building partnerships, particularly with business. Committing to a demand-driven agenda will better assure that WIBs are serving as catalysts for business investment in training and talent development. It may also more effectively connect WIBs to the motivation and resourcefulness exercised by employers for advancing the skills so essential for their economic competitiveness and survival.