This workforce solution was funded by a grant awarded under Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED) as implemented by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration. The solution was created by the grantee and does not necessarily reflect the official position of the U.S. Department of Labor. The Department of Labor makes no guarantees, warranties, or assurances of any kind, express or implied, with respect to such information, including any information on linked sites and including, but not limited to, accuracy of the information or its completeness, timeliness, usefulness, adequacy, continued availability, or ownership. This solution is copyrighted by the institution that created it. Internal use by an organization and/or personal use by an individual for non-commercial purposes is permissible. All other uses require the prior authorization of the copyright owner.

Networks in Workforce Development:

Relationships Among WIBs, Local Partners, State Agencies, and the Role of the Wired Grant

By
Deone Zell and Richard W. Moore
College of Business and Economics
California State University, Northridge

Submitted to:

California Workforce Association
Sacramento, CA

November 30, 2008

www.InnovateCalifornia.net

Funding provided by Department of Labor, Employment & Training Administration: WIRED Initiative

Table of Contents

Executive Summary……2

Introduction……4

Methods……8

Findings……12

Conclusions……23

References……27

Executive Summary

This report represents an effort to describe the growing network of Local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), their local partners and state partners, which were strengthened, in part, through the California Space Authority's (CSA) Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED) project.

This study uses the latest social network analysis methods to investigate one aspect of the WIRED strategy. Our purpose was to investigate whether there are real networks of WIBs emerging in regions throughout the State and to also assess the strength of relationships between WIBs and partner agencies. Specifically, we wanted to describe California's network of local WIBs from five perspectives:

1. How local WIBs network with each other;
2. How local WIBs network with local partners;
3. How local WIBs network with state agencies ;
4. How local WIBs who were WIRED partners (funded and unfunded) are imbedded in the networks described,
5. How local WIBs network with CSA's WIRED project.

Based on our analysis of the network data collected the study reached the following eight conclusions.

1. Strong informal collaborative regional networks of WIBs have developed within California's WIA system.

2. Some WIBs play a valuable "boundary spanning" role connecting regional networks.

3. WIBs have developed strong local networks with partner agencies but ties vary substantially by WIB and by the local partner.

4. Collaborative relationships between WIBs and local partners have increased dramatically over the last 3 years.

5. Ties to state agencies vary substantially in an expected pattern.

6. Wired partners are embedded in the targeted regional networks.

7. Wired partners (both funded and non-funded) appear to work more actively with state agencies and local partners.

8. More research is needed to fully understand the power and value of the emerging informal networks in California's workforce system.

Introduction

> In order to mobilize the necessary human capital and other resources, the boundaries of the traditional bureau or agency must be crossed, within governments, intergovernmentally, and with Non-Governmental Organizations. One important means of boundary crossing is through collaborative networks….. (Agranofff, 2007, p.221)

More and more policymakers recognize that important social problems can only be solved by bringing together a wide range of people and organizations, public and private, for-profit and non-profit, into networks. While many projects claim to create such networks to achieve public goals, few invest in the effort to document and evaluate the network their project did or did not create. This report represents an effort to describe the growing network of Local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), their local partners and state partners, strengthened, in part, through the California Space Authority's (CSA) Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED) project. The work of this study was funded by the WIRED project and sponsored by the California Workforce Association.

The CSA WIRED project was funded by the Department of Labor to bring together a 13 county area dubbed the "innovation corridor" stretching from San Diego to San Francisco. CSA sponsored the project and worked cooperatively with the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, the State of California's Labor and Workforce Development Agency and its Employment Development Department, along with 60 industry, workforce and economic development partners, beginning in 2006. WIRED focused on three strategic goals: sustainable entrepreneurship development,

manufacturing value chain and supplier competitiveness, and development of innovation-oriented technical talent. (www.californiaspaceauthroity.org) The California Workforce Association was funded under the WIRED grant to help in the transformation of the public workforce system into a demand-driven regionally based talent development system, with strong connections to regional economic development and education organizations.

Purpose of this Study

This study uses the latest social network analysis methods to investigate one aspect of the WIRED strategy. Our purpose was to investigate whether there are real networks of WIBs emerging in regions throughout the State and to also assess the strength of relationships between WIBs and partner agencies. Specifically, we wanted to describe California's network of local WIBs from five perspectives:

6. How local WIBs network with each other;
7. How local WIBs network with local partners;
8. How local WIBs network with state agencies ;
9. How local WIBs who were WIRED partners (funded and unfunded) are imbedded in the networks described,
10. How local WIBs network with CSA's WIRED project.

In addition we benchmark our data on relationships with local partners against previous data on local partnerships collected by CWA to look at how partnerships had changed since the inception of the WIRED project.

Before we plunge into our analysis we provide a brief overview on social network analysis.

Social Network Analysis Overview

In organizational studies, social network analysis is the mapping and measuring of relationships between people. Social network analysis has grown in popularity as scholars and practitioners have realized that the value of a network lies in the relationships between individuals, rather than in the individuals themselves. Networks give rise to a variety of benefits at the individual, organizational and societal level, and the cooperation that they enable is at the root of "social capital" which lays the foundation for democracy. In recent years social network analysis has also become more feasible with as a result of technological advances which have facilitated the capture and analysis of network data. Today social network analysis is used to further understand and improve effectiveness in a variety of domains including human resources, leadership development, organizational structure and design, mergers and acquisitions, knowledge management, and the diffusion of innovations.

A second stream of research focuses on networking organizations. In particular in recent years there have been a number of studies that examine how government agencies work with each other and with non-profit and for profit partners to create "Public Management Networks" or PMNs. This focus on networks is driven in part a shift in the government role from providing direct services to "steering the system" by contracting for services. It is also driven by the complexity of modern social problems which seldom respect the boundaries of carefully structured bureaucracies.

Any network consists of two ingredients – nodes (individuals, groups, organizations) and ties (relationships between individuals, groups, or organizations). Common network measures include the following:

- **Tie strength** serves as a measure of strength of connections between two nodes. It is often operationalized by concrete behaviors such as frequency of interaction, type of interaction, duration of interaction, etc., Tie strength provides the structure for cooperation.
- **Trust** serves as the "glue" that binds relationships and enables cooperation. Trust is traditionally thought of as a combination of perceived capability, benevolence and integrity. Trust tends to be positively correlated with tie strength.
- **Accessibility** is the degree and predictability with which one individual is able to reach another when in need. When accessibilty is low, the value of tie strength and trust is markedly decreased.
- **Centrality** is the number of connections linking to any given node. In-degree centrality is the degree to which an individual is sought after by others, while out-degree centrality is the degree to which an individual seeks out others. Centrality is often a sign of power, expertise, or high engagement.
- **Density** is the actual number of connections divided by the total possible number of connections. Sparse networks are good for acquiring new information, while dense networks are good for "getting the job done", especially when times are tough.

Of these measures, the first three – tie strength, trust and accessibility - can be assessed directly at the level of the individual. Centrality and density, in contrast, are properties of the network and are calculated after individual-level data has been collected.

An important note must be made regarding the notion of reciprocity. A tie can either be one-way, or reciprocal (two-way). If Actor A says s/he works with Actor B but Actor B does not say s/he works with Actor B, the relationship is one-way. A tie is reciprocal when Actor A says s/he works with Actor B ***and*** Actor B says s/he works with Actor A. While one-way relationships are healthy in some cases (e.g., the giving of advice from a mentor to a mentee), in situations where high levels of cooperation are needed or desired, reciprocal relationships are paramount because two-way relationships are necessary for true exchange – whether it be the exchange of information, assistance, resources, or ideas.

Methods

In October 2008, we surveyed all 49 WIBS using an on-line questionnaire designed to assess behaviors and relationships between and within three populations: the WIBS (see Table 1), the local partners and the state agencies (see Table 2). The WIRED projects were included in the state agency category. WIBs were guaranteed anonymity, and we obtained an impressive 100% response rate.[1]

Table 1: List of WIBS

1. Alameda County	26. Richmond City
2. Anaheim City	27. Riverside County
3. Contra Costa County	28. Sacramento Employment and Training Agency
4. Foothill Employment and Training Consortium	29. San Benito County
5. Fresno County	30. San Bernardino County
6. Golden Sierra Consortium	31. San Bernardino City
7. Humboldt County	32. San Diego Workforce Partnership, Inc.
8. WIB of Imperial County	33. PIC of San Francisco, Inc.
9. Kern/Inyo/Mono Employers' Training Resource	34. San Joaquin County
10. Kings County	35. Work2Future WIN
11. Pacific Gateway WIB	36. PIC of San Luis Obispo County
12. City of Los Angeles WIB	37. County of San Mateo WIB
13. Los Angeles County	38. Santa Ana Workforce Investment Board
14. Madera County	39. Santa Barbara County
15. Workforce Investment Board of Marin	40. Santa Cruz County
16. County of Mendocino	41. SELACO Southeast Los Angeles County
17. Merced County	42. Workforce Investment Board of Solano County
18. Monterey County Office	
19. Mother Lode Consortium	43. Sonoma County WIB
20. Workforce Investment Board of Napa County	44. South Bay Workforce Investment Board
21. NoRTEC Governing Board	45. Stanislaus County
22. North Central Counties Consortium	46. Tulare County Workforce Investment Board
23. NOVA Consortium (North Santa Clara)	47. County of Ventura
24. City of Oakland	48. Verdugo Private Industry Council
25. Orange County	49. Yolo County Workforce WIB

[1] 100% responses were obtained for the "who do you work with" question; however, we were not able to obtain complete behavioral and trust data for all WIBS.

Table 2:
List of Local Partners and State Agencies

Local Partners	State Agencies/organizations
1. Local lead economic development organization 2. Local chamber(s) of commerce 3. Community colleges 4. Local educational agency K-12 5. Four year colleges and universities 6. Regional organizations (COGs, regional non-profits) 7. Local LMID (Labor Market Information Division) Unit 8. Local TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) Program 9. Community Service Block Grant Agency 10. California Space Authority (WIRED Project for the Corridor) 11. WIRED Project Northern California 12. Other regional or local business organizations	1. EDD's Workforce Investment Division (WID) 2. California Workforce Investment Board (CWIB) 3. California Workforce Association (CWA) 4. Employment Training Panel (ETP) 5. California Space Authority WIRED Project for the Innovation Corridor 6. WIRED Project for Northern CA 7. California Department of Education 8. Chancellor's Office of the California Community Colleges 9. California Department of Social Services

Measures

Each of the three measures (strength of ties, trust, accessibility) was operationalized by developing a number of questions designed to represent them. For strength of ties, questions were chosen to represent specific behaviors that WIBs might engage in with each other, and with local partners and state agencies (e.g., planning together, sharing board membership, seeking funding together). The questions varied slightly depending on the type of organization each WIB was being asked to think about, but were identical for the most part. One initial question simply asked each WIB director which organizations his/her WIB worked with. This question was used to determine the list of organizations about which each WIB was queried further. Trust was measured by asking questions about the perceived capability, benevolence and integrity of the respective WIB, local partner or state agency. One question was designed to measure accessibility. Composites were created for each of the three measures by recoding the response to each question into a

high - low, two level measure. The questions, dichotomizing procedures and composite ranges for tie strength, trust and accessibility are shown in Tables 3, 4 and 5.

Table 3:
Strength of Tie Questions and Composite Ranges

Note: In addition to the questions below, all WIBs were asked, "Who have you worked with on issues, programs, or projects in the last year?"		
Local Partners (All Y,N)	WIBs (All Y,N)	State Agencies
1. Has the WIB's Executive Director sit on this organization's board? 2. Plan together to meet workforce needs? 3. Have a formal alliance to serve clients? 4. Co-locate with this organization at at least one facility? 5. Share a contract(s) with this organization? 6. Seek funding together with this organization? 7. Have someone from this organization sit on the WIB? 8. Have a member of your WIB sit on this organization's board?	1. Has your Executive Director sit on this organization's board? 2. Plan together to meet workforce needs? 3. Co-locate with this organization at at least one facility? 4. Share a contract(s) with this organization? 5. Seek funding together with this organization? 6. Have someone from this organization sit on your WIB? 7. Have a member of your WIB sit on this organization's board?	1. Do you serve on a special advisory group or committee? (Y,N) 2. How often do you attend meetings? (Regularly, Occasionally, Rarely) 3. I often use information from this organization to help manage my program (SA, A, D, SD)
COMPOSITES		
Dichotomization: **Y**,N Range 0-8	Dichotomization: **Y**,N Range 0-7	Dichotomization: • **Regularly,** Occasionally Rarely • **SA, A**, D, SD Range 0-3

Table 4:
Trust Questions and Composite Ranges

Local Partners (All SA, A, D, SD)	WIBS (All SA, A, D, SD)	State Agencies (All SA, A, D, SD)
1. his organization is highly capable of solving my community's workforce issues. 2. This organization is very concerned about the well-being and success of my WIB. 3. This organization shares my WIB's core values.	1. This organization is highly capable of solving my community's workforce issues. 2. This organization is very concerned about the well-being and success of my WIB. 3. This organization shares my WIB's core values.	1. This organization is highly capable of solving my community's workforce issues. 2. This organization is very concerned about the well-being and success of my WIB. 3. This organization shares my WIB's core values
COMPOSITES		
Range 0-3	Range 0-3	Range 0-3
Note: Dichotomization indicated in bold: **SA, A,** D, SD		

Table 5:
Accessibility Question and Composite Ranges

Local Partners (All SA, A, D, SD)	WIBs (All SA, A, D, SD)	State Agencies (All SA, A, D, SD)
1. If my WIB needs information, I can count on this organization to respond within 48 hours.	1. If my WIB needs information, I can count on this organization to respond within 48 hours.	1. If my organization needs information, I can count on this rganization to respond within 48 hours.

Finally, the following demographics were collected for the WIBS:

- How WIB participated in WIRED grant (Did not participate, was listed in grant but was not a funded partner, was a funded partner
- Did WIB receive special (non-formula) funds from ETP (Yes/No)
- Did WIB receive special (non-formula) funds from EDD (Yes/No)

Findings

Findings are divided into three parts: (1) Relationships between WIBs; (2) Relationships between WIBs and local partners (one-way only, from WIBs to local partners); (3) Relationships between WIBs, WIRED and state agencies (also one-way, from WIBs to state agencies).

(1) Relationships Between WIBs

Figure 1 presents data from the WIBS only. It shows responses to the overall question, "Who have you worked with on regional issues, programs or projects in the last year?" Grey lines represent one-way ties, while red lines represent reciprocal ties. As can be seen, distinct clusters are apparent, and certain clusters appear to have more reciprocal ties than others. However, the story does not become clear until one looks only at reciprocal ties.

Figure 1:
Working Relationships Between WIBs (one and two-way)

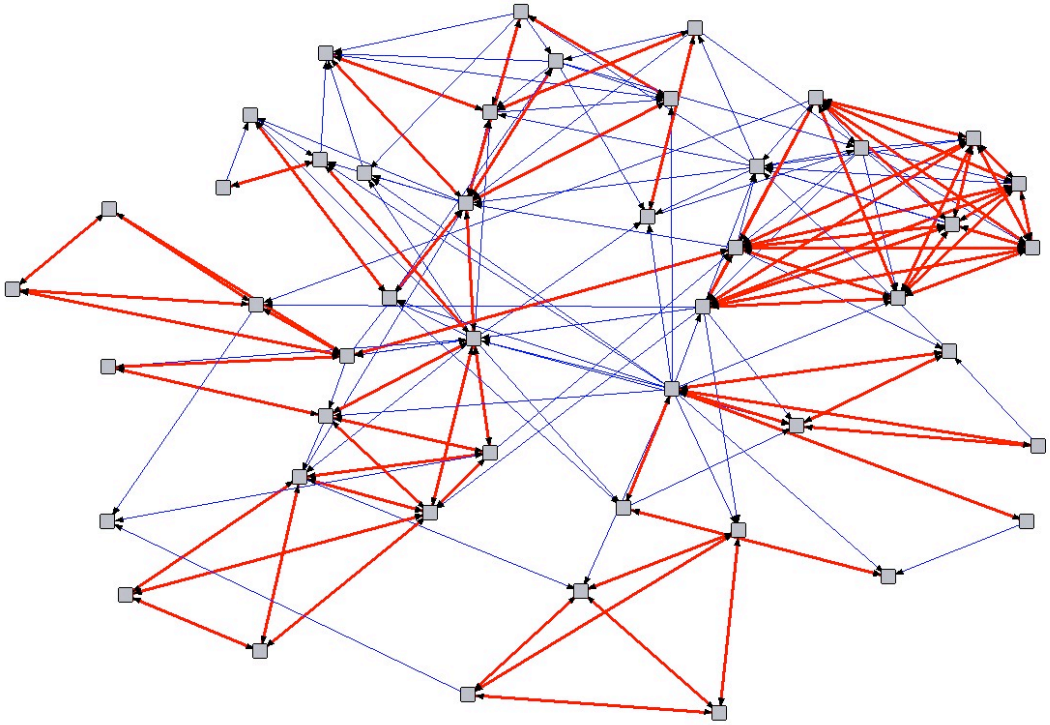


Figure 2 presents data from WIBS only, but this time only the reciprocal ties are shown. As noted earlier, reciprocal relationships represent true exchange – in this case, in terms of who works with whom. This figure suggests that strong and powerful relationships exist among the WIBS. Also, it becomes even more evident that the clusters vary in density. For example, the North Bay and Central Valley clusters are the densest (100% and 91% density, respectively) while the Southern California cluster is the least dense (16% density). (Four WIBs who were not reciprocally tied to any other WIBs are shown in the bottom left corner of the figure.) The high density of the Central Valley and North Bay clusters suggests that these groups are tightly-knit, know each other well, and work together in a variety of capacities. This density suggests that these groups may be

especially effective at utilizing resources and accomplishing organizational goals, especially in times of duress or uncertainty.

Also noteworthy is that certain WIBS are performing key "boundary-spanning" roles by linking the WIB networks together, creating a "backbone" that extends through the Central Valley, Central Coast, Bay Area, and Southern California clusters. Like sparse networks, such cross-boundary linkages are healthy and aid the acquisition of resources due to the far-reaching resources that can be tapped.

Figure 2:
Working Relationships Between WIBS (Reciprocal Ties Only)

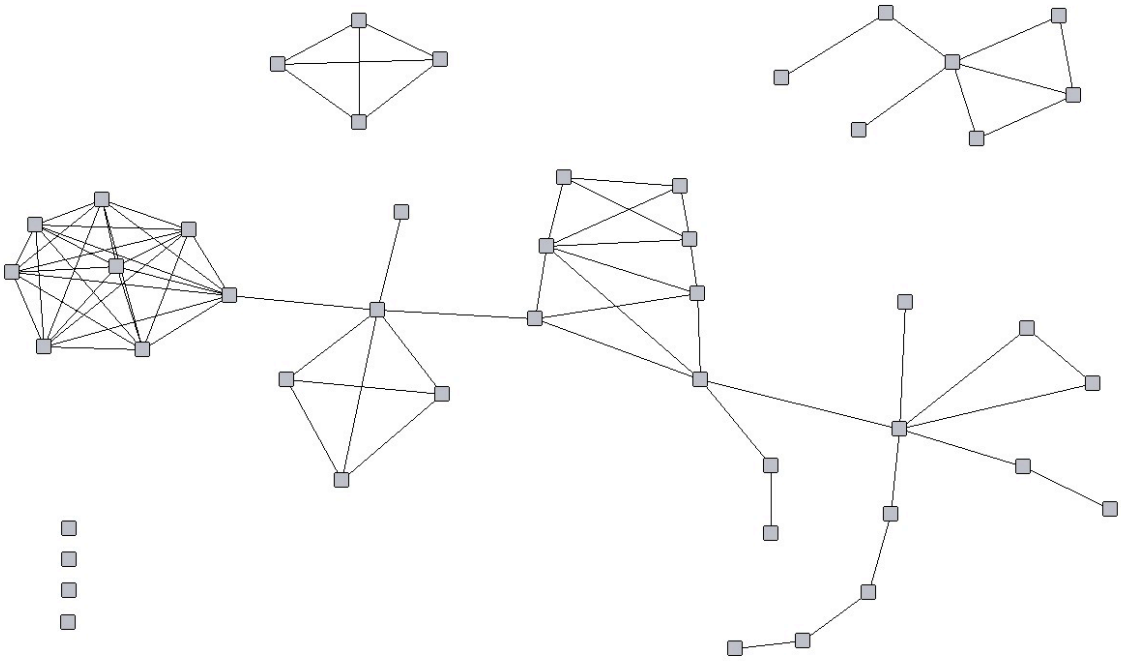


Figure 3 is the same as Figure 2 except in Figure 3, the WIBs have been color-coded based on their funding status. As shown by the distribution of WIRED participants (red and green), this figure suggests that, as intended by the WIRED grant, WIRED WIBs are well

embedded in the targeted regional networks (the Innovation Corridor and the Northern California corridor).

Figure 3:
Working Relationships Between WIBs By How Participated In Wired Grant

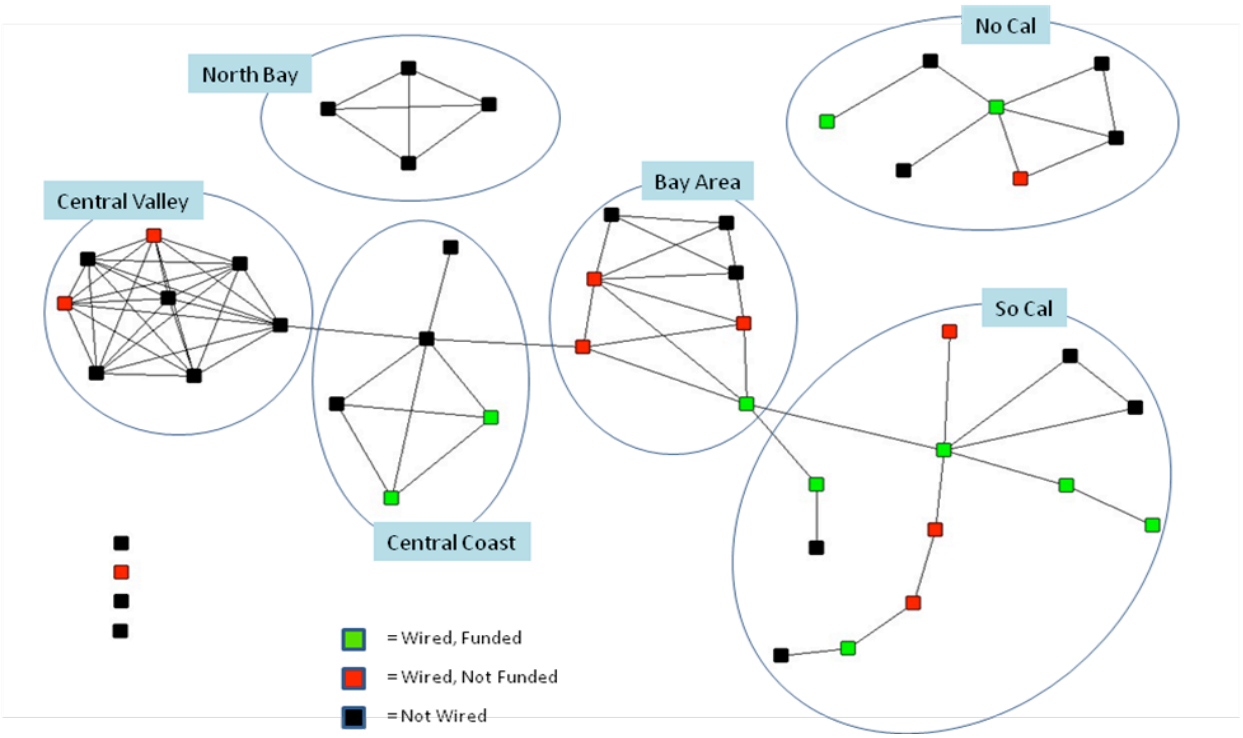
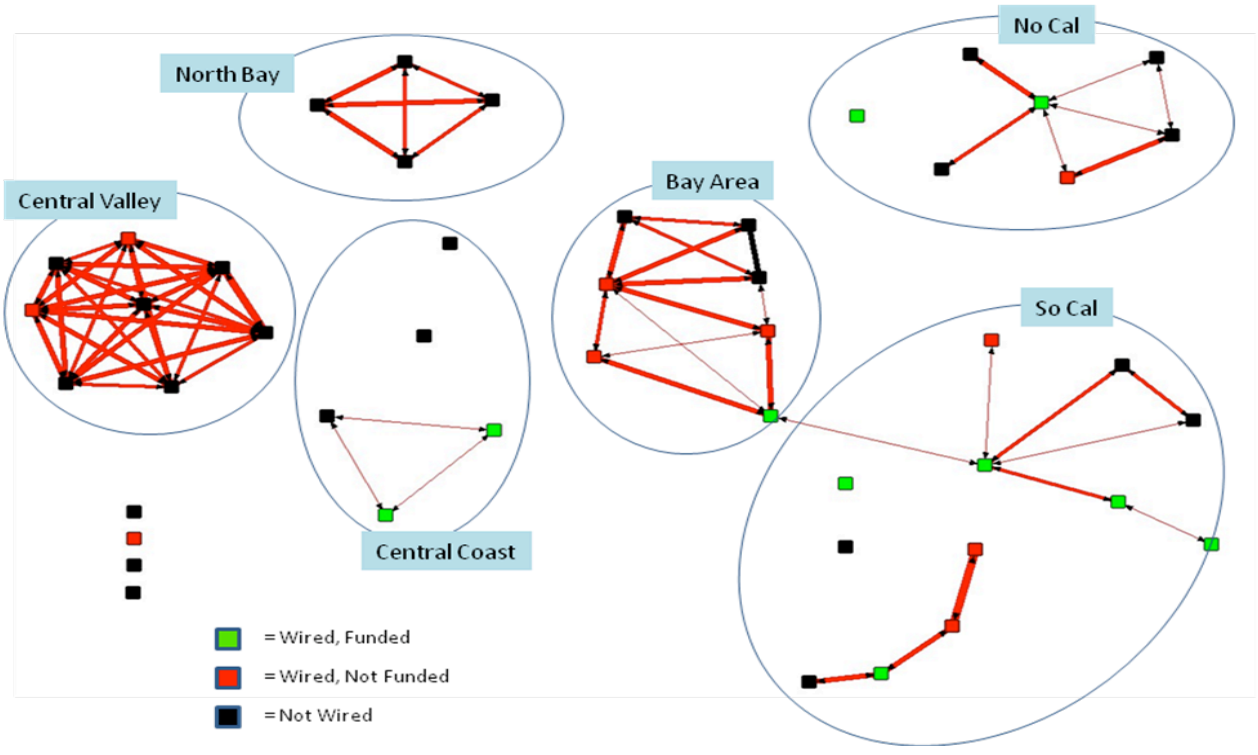


Figure 4 shows reciprocal tie strength, based on the composite. Important to remember here is that "tie strength" data was not available for all WIBS; therefore, there are relatively fewer "connections" on this figure than on Figure 3.

Despite this caveat, this figure shows strong ties, suggesting that WIBs are working closely together. Strength of ties between WIBs could range from 0-7 based on the composite. Thicker, darker lines represent stronger ties. As can be shown, the highest frequency of strong ties exists in the Central Valley cluster, North Bay cluster, and Bay Area cluster, while relatively fewer (but still strong) ties exist within the Central Coast, Northern

California, and Southern California clusters. The Central Valley WIBs have recently been funded through the Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley to work together on a set of regional initiatives. In the past 10 years, both the North Bay Employment Connection and East Bay Works have sought and received funds to collaborate on regionally-based projects. The high trust levels associated with the Central Valley, North Bay and Bay Area clusters mean individuals in these groups rate each other highly on competence, benevolence and integrity. These high levels of trust most likely predispose the clusters to high levels of cooperation and coordination.

Figure 4:
Reciprocal Tie Strength Between WIBS by How Participated in Wired Grant



The diagram for tie strength and accessibility between WIBS looks similar to that of trust; however, they are not presented here.

(2) Relationships Between WIBs and Local Partners

Figure 5 shows the working relationships between WIBs and local partners and presents the in-degree centrality of the partners. The relationships are one-way, from WIBs to local partners only. The relative centrality of the local partners (number of connections into) can be compared by looking at the ring of black around the blue nodes, which is created by the black arrow-heads. Thus, the thicker the ring around the local partner, the more central, or connected, it is. (See Figure 6 for numbers to back up the rings.)

Figure 5:
One-Way Working Relationships Between WIBS (Red) and Local Partners (Blue)

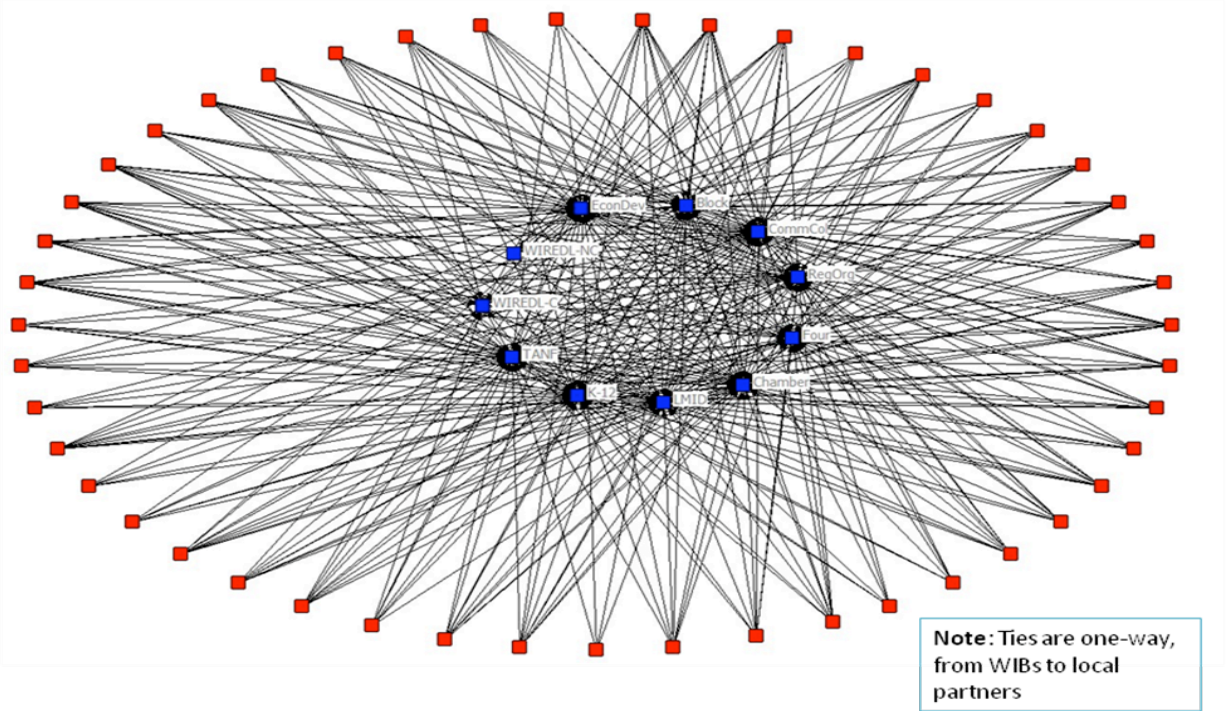


Figure 6 provides centrality numbers to back-up the graphics presented on Figure 5. Most attention should be paid to the first column, which is highlighted in yellow. This column presents the percentage of WIBs who say they work with each organization. This

number, which can be thought of as "work centrality", is calculated by taking the actual number of connections leading into each local partner and dividing it by the total number of connections that could possibly lead to each local partner (from the WIBs).

Figure 6:
Working Relationships, Tie Strength, Trust, and Accessibility Metrics from WIBS to Local Partners

Local Partners	Percentage of WIBSs who say they work with each organization	Average tie strength that WIBs extend to each organization	Average amount of trust extended from WIBs to each organization	Percentage of WIBs who believe each organization is accessible
Community Colleges	100%	67%	82%	77%
Economic development organization	94%	57%	78%	83%
Local K-12 educational agency	94%	52%	70%	68%
Local TANF	91%	60%	61%	62%
Chamber of Commerce	89%	35%	56%	70%
Regional organizations	81%	40%	61%	62%
Local LMID Unit	81%	18%	54%	64%
Four year colleges and universities	74%	28%	45%	36%
Community Service Block Grant Agency	70%	29%	47%	45%

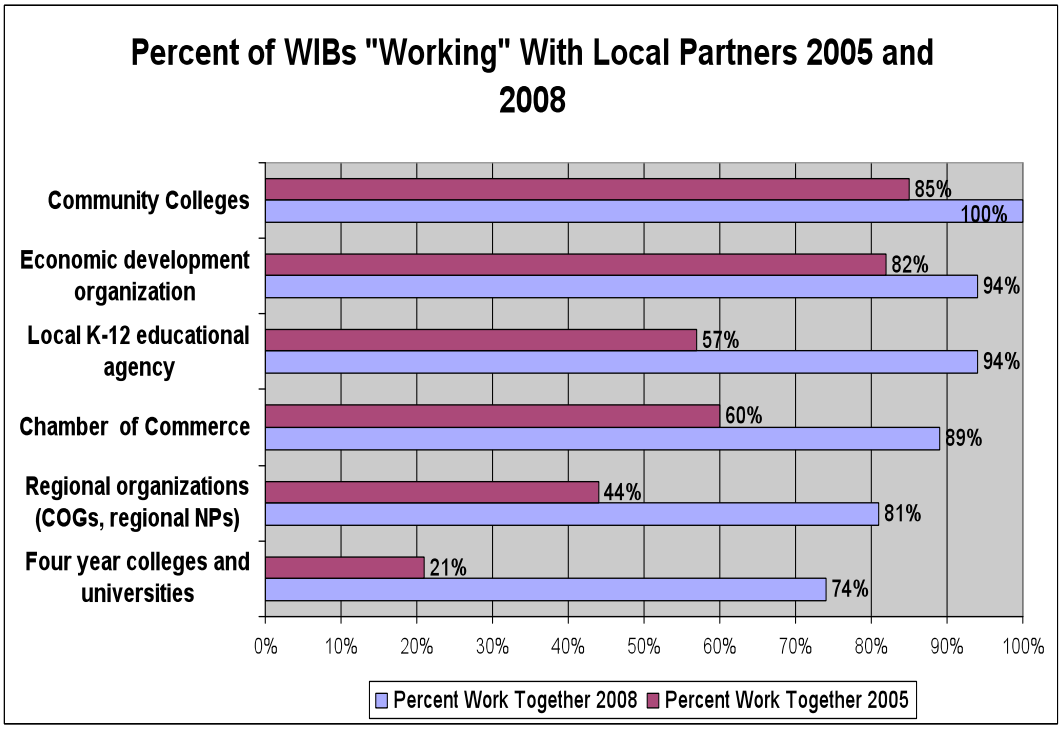
Here we can see that WIBS have developed strong networks with local partners, with some variation that might be expected. As can be seen, Community Colleges have a centrality of 100%, which means that each and every WIB says they work with community colleges. Economic development organizations, Local K-12 agencies, and Local TANFs are all highly central to WIBS. Less central to the WIBs are four-year colleges and universities and community service block agencies – although these still have relatively high centralities, at 74% and 70%, respectively.

Figures representing the tie strength, trust, and accessibility centralities are also shown. As can be seen, greatest tie strength exists between WIBs and community colleges and Local TANF agencies. Greatest trust is extended to community colleges and economic development organizations. Economic development corporations and community colleges are considered most accessible. Tie strength, trust, and accessibility numbers must be interpreted with caution, however. Naturally, the lower the work centrality of any given local partner (the fewer ties leading to it), the fewer the possible number of connections representing strength of ties, trust, or accessibility. In fact it is impossible for these percentages to exceed the work centrality measure. To be properly interpreted, therefore, these numbers must be "pegged against" the work percentages. For this reason, these numbers may appear lower than they really are, and are best interpreted in a relative manner.

Figure 7 shows the change in working relationships between WIBs and local partners over time. Data from two time periods are presented – 2005 and 2008. As can be seen, the percentage of WIBs who worked with each of the local partners rises over time *in each and every case.* Especially dramatic increases are noted in the cases of K-12, four-year colleges and universities, and regional organizations. This suggests that collaborative relationships are developing and strengthening steadily and rapidly over time between the WIBs and local partners[2].

[2] A few cautions on interpreting this data, the CWA survey had a high response rate over 90% but did not include all WIBs as our survey did. Also the question was asked with slightly different wording. Finally, the CWA survey only asked about the agencies listed in the graph here, a shorter list than the list on our survey.

Figure 7:
Comparison of Working Relationships Between WIBs and Local Partners, 2005-08



(3) Relationships Between WIBs and State Agencies.

Figure 8 presents the degree to which each state agency is central to the WIBs. As with the local partners, it is best to focus first and foremost on the first column, which presents the "work centrality" – the percentage of WIBs who say they work with each type of state agency. As can be seen, the ties to state agencies vary significantly. However, the variation is in an expected pattern. The highest centralities are seen with the California Workforce Association and the EDD's Workforce Investment Division, and the lowest are seen with the California Department of Social Services and the California Department of Education. There are virtually no functional reasons that local WIBs would work with these agencies. As noted earlier, the tie strength, trust, and accessibility figures must be

interpreted with caution as they must be pegged against, and can rise no higher than, the work percentages.

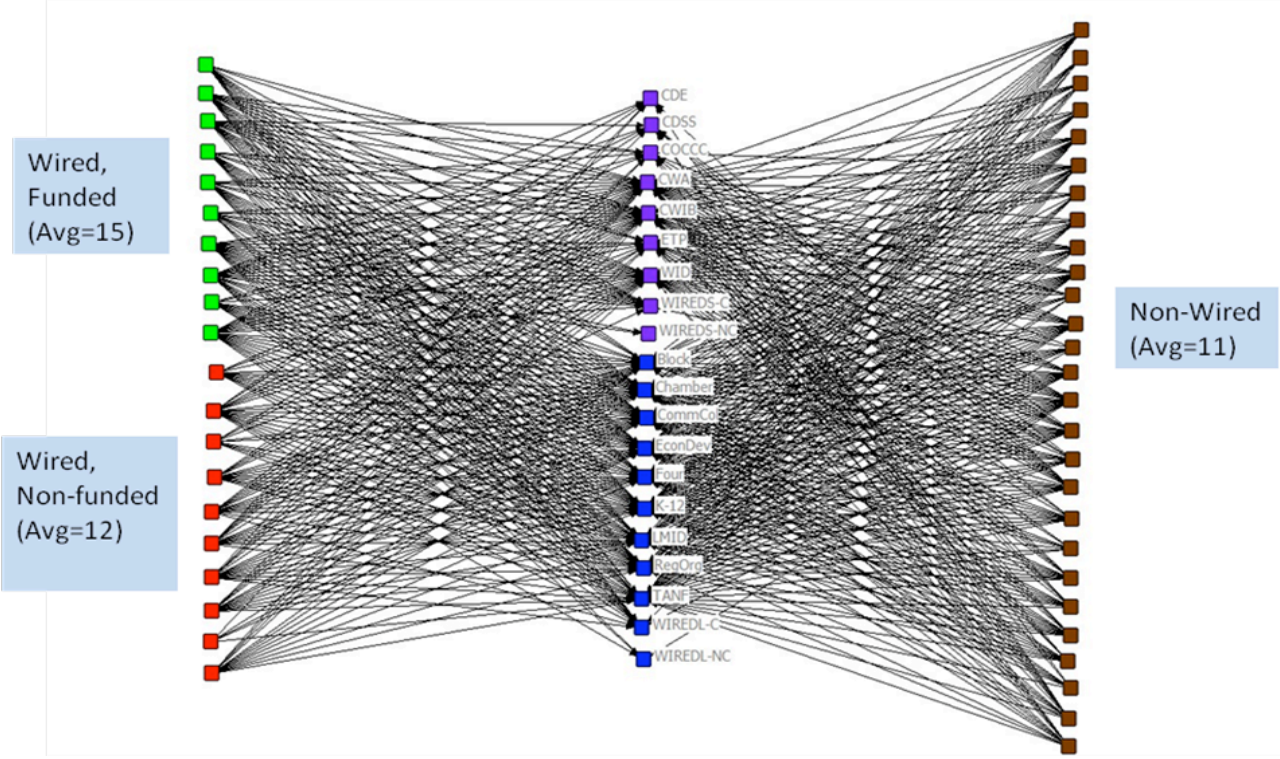
Figure 8:
Working Relationships, Tie Strength, Trust, and Accessibility Measures Between WIBs and State Agencies

State Agencies	Percentage of WIBSs who say they work with each organization	Average tie strength that WIBs extend to each organization	Average amount of trust extended from WIBs to each organization	Percentage of WIBs who believe each organization is accessible
California Workforce Association	96%	82%	89%	94%
EDD's Workforce Investment Division	89%	45%	58%	60%
California Workforce Investment Board	83%	40%	65%	62%
Employment Training Panel	60%	15%	40%	47%
Chancellor's Office of the California Community Colleges	28%	8%	18%	19%
California Department of Social Services	21%	9%	9%	9%
California Department of Education	15%	4%	7%	6%

Figure 9 shows the frequency of working relationships between WIBs, local partners, and state agencies in graphical form. WIBs are grouped into three clusters depending on how they participated in the WIRED grant. State agencies and local partners are shown in the center of the "butterfly", with state agencies in purple and local partners in blue. This graph reveals that the average out-degree centrality (the average frequency with which WIBs reach out to local partners and state agencies) differs by their status in the WIRED grant. Specifically, WIRED, funded WIBs reach out to an average of 15 partners/agencies; WIRED, non-funded WIBS reach out to an average of 12 partners/agencies, and non-WIRED WIBs reach out to an average of 11 agencies. While it

is impossible to determine cause and effect, this makes it clear that for whatever reason, WIRED, funded and WIRED, non-funded WIBs are working with local/partners to a greater degree than are non-WIRED WIBs.

Figure 9:
Working Relationships Between WIBS, Local Partners, and State Agencies



Conclusions

This study marks the first attempt to systematically measure California WIBs and their local networks. It also provides insights into the how the WIRED project networked into the California Workforce system through partnering WIBs. Based on our findings, we draw the following conclusions:

1. **Strong informal collaborative regional networks of WIBs have developed within California's WIA system.**

Perhaps the most interesting finding to us is that WIBs, with only limited funding and without any current policy direction, have formed strong regional networks with other WIBs. These networks are characterized by high levels of trust. WIBs work together in variety of ways; ranging from joint planning, to co-locating, to seeking funds to solve common problems. The regional nature of these networks makes good sense considering California's size and the diversity of regional economies within the state.

To our knowledge this is the first comprehensive network analysis of WIBs at the state level. The existence of these ad hoc but strong regional networks implies to us that there are aggressive regional strategies emerging to solve workforce problems, independent of any state level strategy. This seems to us an area that deserves much more serious investigation.

2 **Some WIBs play a valuable "boundary spanning" role connecting regional networks.**

The regional networks we identified are not isolated completely from other networks. Rather they are connected by "boundary spanning" WIBs who are members of more

than one regional network. These boundary spanners may play an important role in transferring information and practices among the network.

2. **WIBs have developed strong local networks with partner agencies but ties vary substantially by WIB and by the local partner.**

Local WIBs were intended to be hubs of local networks that brought together all the players in the local workforce systems, public schools, community colleges, local employers, other social service agencies etc. This analysis documents the current relations among these partners. The results show some interesting patterns that span the WIBs. Ties appear to be strongest with educational agencies and local economic development organizations, ties are less strong with private sector groups, four year colleges and labor market information units. Interestingly ties were weak with Community Service Block Grant Agencies which represent a federal program whose purposes overlap with WIA.

4. **Collaborative relationships between WIBs and local partners have increased dramatically over the last 3 years.**

Comparing our results with a similar survey by CWA, we found substantial increases in the percent of WIBs who reported "working with" local partners. The most impressive finding was the percent went up substantially for all local partners. The biggest gains in cooperation were with four year colleges and universities, regional organizations (such as COGs and other regional non-profits), local K-12 education and chambers of commerce. These results indicate to us that something is going on to drive more collaboration at the local level, as a trend like this is not likely to be due to chance.

5. **Ties to state agencies vary substantially in an expected pattern.**

Not surprisingly local WIBs' ties to agencies at the state level were much weaker than ties at the local level. As one would expect the ties were strongest to agencies dealing directly with WIA, such as CWA itself, the Workforce Investment Division of EDD, and the California Workforce Investment Board. At the state level ties to educational agencies were weak indicating the primary relationship with education is local only.

6. **Wired partners are embedded in the targeted regional networks.**

WIBs that were WIRED partners were found in all the regional networks in the parts of the state served by the WIRED Project. These WIBs frequently played a "boundary spanning" role connecting one regional network to another. We can't tell if these WIBs were boundary spanners because of their participation in WIRED or if they were more connected prior to joining the WIRED project. In any case the results show that WIRED effectively reached into the regional networks in its service area.

7. **Wired partners (both funded and non-funded) appear to work more actively with state agencies and local partners.**

Our data shows that WIBS that were WIRED partners report stronger and more active ties to both local partners and state agencies, than non-WIRED WIBs. We can't tell whether these WIBs joined WIRED because they are activist WIBs or if they became more active and better connected because they are in WIRED. In either case the results indicate that the WIRED partners had more active networks on average than non-WIRED WIBs. Certainly these relationships helped WIRED to achieve its goals.

8. More research is needed.

To our knowledge this is the first state-wide analysis of local WIBs' networks. Our results provide an intriguing map of the ad hoc networks formed among WIBs and between WIBs and their local and state partners. But it is just a first step. Our research raises many other questions. What caused the regional networks to form? How effective are the regional networks and does their effectiveness vary? What local practices and policies lead to strong local networks? Who provides the leadership for the networks we identified? Why do some WIBs remain outside the regional networks? Could successful networks be replicated else where?

There are many questions beyond these that need to be answered to understand the role of networks in workforce development but we hope that this study will lead to a continuing investigation.

References

Agranoff, R. (2007). *Managing within networks: Adding value to public organizations.* Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

Funding provided by Department of Labor, Employment & Training Administration: WIRED Initiative