



## » Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Implementation

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, also known as WIOA, became effective on July 1, 2015. However, the act includes several provisions that become effective on other dates. On March 1, 2016, governors must submit a Unified or Combined State Plan pertaining to workforce investment programs, adult education and vocational rehabilitation to the U.S. secretary of labor. Alignment between the four core programs within the law is to be a key focus of the state plans. The core programs consist of: (1) the Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth formula programs administered by the U.S. Department of Labor, or DOL; (2) the Adult Education and Literacy program administered by the U.S. Department of Education; (3) the Wagner-Peyser Act employment services program administered by DOL; and (4) programs under the Vocational Rehabilitation Act. In addition, the new WIOA performance accountability provisions take effect on July 1, 2016.

## » Career Pathways

Students in K-12, postsecondary education and individuals re-entering the workforce are finding greater job-specific training opportunities and career pathways aligned with business needs in their states and local communities. In 2015, the states tuned in to the increased training and skills needed to compete in the global job market. According to the Center on Education and the Workforce at Georgetown University, 65 percent of all jobs in the economy will require some postsecondary education and training beyond high school by 2020, with 35 percent requiring at least a bachelor's degree. Alignment between the education sector, workforce development and employers is crucial to meeting the job market needs of today and tomorrow.

## » Employment Issues for Individuals with Criminal Records

An estimated 70 million people in America have a criminal record. State leaders are focused on how employment can play a critical role in reducing recidivism and improving other long-term outcomes for people who have been involved with the criminal justice system. Understanding and addressing these challenges requires the collaboration of employers, workforce development officials and policy makers at every level of government. Each year, more states consider policy changes to address employability issues for people with criminal records. Policies being implemented at the state level to address this population include the adoption of fair-hiring policies that bar the inclusion of conviction history in job applications, increased access to occupational licensing and certificates of rehabilitation for people with criminal records, as well as the use of tax incentives and no-cost liability bonds for employers.

## » Engaging Individuals with Disabilities in the Workforce

Many working age adults with disabilities are faced with structural and attitudinal barriers that block access to steady employment and economic security. States are developing new and innovative pathways to meaningfully engage people with disabilities in the workforce. The recruitment, hiring, retention and promotion of people with disabilities in the workplace are of great benefit to employers. Individuals with disabilities can provide businesses with flexible, innovative thinking that provides a competitive advantage in today's market. Addressing the barriers to employment is the first step to leveraging the substantial benefits of increased inclusion in the workforce.

## » Veteran Employment Issues

Veterans' employment in the civilian labor market is an issue of ongoing interest. According to federal data, the unemployment rate for veterans who served after September 2001 is almost double the unemployment rate for nonveterans. Veterans offer a unique set of skills, experiences and leadership abilities developed during their years of service in the armed forces that are highly desirable to employers. Finding how best to support veterans and separating service members with employment and education resources presents challenges and opportunities to today's state leaders.

**For more information on these topics and for additional resources on workforce development policy, see » [www.csg.org/top5in2016](http://www.csg.org/top5in2016).**



**Elizabeth Whitehouse** joined The Council of State Governments in December 2015 as the director of education and workforce policy.

Whitehouse most recently served in Kentucky Gov. Steve Beshear's administration, where she co-wrote Kentucky's successful \$44.3 million Race to the Top grant application. She helped shepherd through early childhood legislation and was charged with the budget and planning recommendations for the state's \$25 million tobacco settlement funds for early childhood programs.

As policy adviser to the Kentucky Education and Workforce Development Cabinet secretary, she helped revitalize the career and technical education system and worked on fully funding Kentucky's unemployment insurance fund.

Whitehouse is a graduate of the University of the Cumberlands.

### Get Involved

CSG provides state leaders a variety of regional and national opportunities to actively engage on issues of importance to their jurisdictions and constituents. CSG regional and national committees and task forces are designed to encourage multi-state problem solving, the sharing of best practices, and networking among state officials and between the public and private sectors.

The CSG Education and Workforce Development Public Policy Committee is co-chaired this year by Rep. John DeBerry of Tennessee and Rep. Jacqueline Sly of South Dakota. In recent years, the committee has focused on several key issues, including preschool education, the role of technology in instruction, postsecondary degree attainment and the transition from school to sustainable employment.

The committee will hold its next meeting as part of the 2016 CSG National Conference, Dec. 8-11, in Colonial Williamsburg, Va.

## CSG RESOURCES»



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