

I. IDENTIFICATION INFORMATION:

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II. GENERAL INFORMATION

Name of Program/Project Nominated: America's Job Link Alliance
Nomination Category: Tools and Technology
Month/Year Initiated: November 2000
Is the nomination for: statewide program
If local, the name of the locality is:

III. RESOURCE

Total Start-Up Costs: Direct: There were no start-up costs associated with starting the America's Job Link Alliance. Kansas, however, did spend \$2.3 million to implement the Ohio Works system. There were no start-up costs associated with starting the America's Job Link Alliance. Kansas, however, did spend \$2.3 million to implement the Ohio Works system.

Fund Source(s): Kansas spent One-Stop Implementation Grant funds for the development effort. The U.S. Department of Labor has provided \$4.5 million to assist with development efforts and to provide technical support.

Indirect:

Total On-going Annual Costs: Direct: \$420,000
Fund Source(s): WIA 15% Set Aside and Wagner-Peyser
Indirect: \$80,000

IV. SYNOPSIS (Narrative Section)

Name of file: d:\inetpub\wwwroot\surveys\synopsis_final.doc

V. CRITERIA INFORMATION (Narrative Section)

Name of file: d:\inetpub\wwwroot\surveys\criteria_final.doc

IV. Synopsis

America's Job Link Alliance Compass Prize Nomination

Basic Services

The America's Job Link Alliance (AJLA) is an innovative approach to systems building that is redefining how states resolve their needs. AJLA was created to maximize their return on investments in information systems. AJLA has also helped states achieve the highest level of success in the workforce development strategies and business practices that surround the design, implementation, operation, management and improvement of those systems.

AJLA members team together to develop modules and technology features and adapt and improve them to meet their individual needs; in turn sharing those improvements with other members for their consideration. In addition to the system development, the Alliance goes beyond a traditional consortium in that it continues the cooperative relationship past the development efforts to ensure the most effective strategies and business practices that surrounds the implementation, operation, management and improvement of those systems once they are in place. Each America's Job Link Alliance member state agrees to share in the following areas: technology development, best practices, marketing, training and purchasing.

Accomplishments

The America's Job Link Alliance accomplishments can be measured in breadth and depth. The Alliance has grown from the original 7 states in November 2000 to now 29 states strong.. The core Workforce Investment Act compliant system developed by Ohio has been enhanced, customized and implemented in Kansas as the Kansas JobLink system. Nebraska Workforce Development – Department of Labor and the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission have implemented their version of JobLink. The Vermont Department of Employment and Training is in the process of implementing its own state specific version of the JobLink system.

The depth of the America's Job Link Alliance can be measured in the reduction of time, cost and risk to implement the Alliance system. The Kansas Department of Human Resources was able to implement their fully compliant WIA operating system in four months for an investment of approximately \$2.3 million – a savings of more than \$10 million from the Ohio costs. The Nebraska Workforce Development - Department of Labor estimates that participation in the Alliance has already saved Nebraska taxpayers at least 1,920 hours of development time and \$200,000 of developer cost. By collaborating in the Alliance, Nebraska was also able to design, develop, and implement a job seeker and employer self-service tool utilizing O*NET in less than 6 months. Because of Nebraska's participation in the America's Job Link Alliance, the state was able to leverage the analysis, functionality, and design of the self-service module for employers and job seekers, which was already developed and tested by other Alliance members.

Oklahoma estimates a savings of approximately \$1.9 million for development. Vermont expects to save \$1.9 million. While that is still a significant investment, the time savings realized are likely unequalled considering the scope and breadth of the project.

Reasons the Nomination should be considered for a National Award

The America's Job Link Alliance is worthy of a national award because it is a true one-stop case management system capable of cross-programmatic service delivery and providing single case files accessible by case managers from multiple agencies.

V. Criteria

A. Project Basis

The America's Job Link Alliance (AJLA) was born when the needs of internal and external customers far outweighed available resources. The Workforce Investment Act required states to provide case management and customer tracking systems that communicated across agency lines. Meanwhile, internal and external customers required a solution that allowed a no wrong door approach to customer service. At the same time, current consortium efforts were not adequately taking individual state needs into consideration.

Kansas' goal was simply to implement a WIA compliant one-stop operating system and to have it operational as quickly as possible. In doing their evaluation of systems available nationally, they determined that the Ohio Works system already developed and in use by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services could meet most of their needs if some additional work were done to revise and improve it. Kansas Department of Human Resources officials approached Ohio agency leaders about the possibility of receiving the development code so the system could be enhanced and implemented in Kansas. Ohio generously agreed. Once Kansas was able to enhance and implement the system in only four months for \$2.3 million, they realized the tremendous gains that could be realized from such a collaborative relationship. In November 2000 the America's Job Link Alliance was born.

The America's Job Link Alliance software is designed to improve the user experience for internal and external customers alike, including job seekers, employers, state/local staff and WIB's, partners and training providers.

Job Seekers and Case Managers - The America's Job Link systems is designed to serve as the backbone of states' network of One-Stop Career Centers. The systems is capable of linking multiple state agencies and 70 federally funded workforce programs. It currently links WIA, Welfare to Work, Job Service and NAFTA/TAA. In the future, it will link Rehabilitation Services, TANF and Food Stamps Programs. The America's Job Link system allows job seekers to come to a One-Stop Career Center, interact with any agency's case manager, and receive services. Job seekers can also use any PC to search for jobs or post resumes. Adopted in whole the America's Job Link system allows case managers to view pertinent information on a client without having to move from one agency system to another.

Employers and Job Seekers - The America's Job Link system is the tool job seekers can rely upon to assess their skills and learn about current labor market trends and employers can rely upon to list job orders and determine how well a job seeker measures up to their standards. Through the use of skill matching, employers can view online how well a potential employee meets their job qualification criteria. The better the match, the lower subsequent training costs will be and the higher retention rates should be. Employers can also check their UI Tax Status Report online and file an appeal online with automatic scheduling.

Job Seekers, Service Providers and Case Managers - In most states, a single mother with five children, but no G.E.D., is likely to qualify for many programs. In the past, she might have to fill out core data more than ten times as she goes through the application process. The America's Job Link system eliminates the need for duplicate data entry in many cases, so the single mother will need only to provide the core information once.

The system also provides access to data on service providers. From online information regarding what training is available in an area, to directions to facilities—complete with maps, to performance data on the quality of particular providers, the America's Job Link system improves choice. No longer are case managers in sole possession of relevant data. Customers have the data to choose the best training, and the best training provider. They also have the ability to file a claim via the Internet. The system also links the Unemployment and Job Search pages to assist unemployed working in finding jobs.

America's Job Link software can be distinguished among the other consortium products for the following reasons:

- It is modular in design – Career Information System (CIS), Eligible Training Providers (ETP), JobLink, ServiceLink, and the new fiscal module can be run as stand alone products as well as integrated products.
- There is full integration between self-service and staff assisted modules.
 - Automated registration with Job Service
 - Self-service application for suppressed job orders
 - Automated eligibility determination for self-service applicants
 - Self-service employer access to staff assisted registrant resumes
- There is full integration of local labor market information with job matching and resume matching for self-service and staff assisted activities
- Users can generate WIA reports online
- Integrated access to ETP system for self-service and staff assisted activities
- Integrated reemployment services management
- Unemployment insurance claimants have common access including automated job matching during processing of initial claim and continued claims.
- Provides the ability to track self-service activities without registering a client in a specific program (like WIA, WTW, TAA, or LE)
- Allows for the tracking of registrations and provision of services in all WIA mandatory partner programs.

B. Project Operation

Kansas Department of Human Resources leaders believed the key to successful implementation of a cross-agency system lied in thorough advance planning and partner support. They began their quest for a one-stop operating system by developing a set of guiding principles and conducting an extensive analysis of customer and agency requirements for a workforce development system. Working with an executive steering committee whose function was to determine the final form of the project, Kansas was able to accurately map the needs of both self-service and staff-assisted customers and the requirements of an inter-agency case management system. This effort allowed Kansas to determine that the existing Ohio system could be imported into Kansas and modified to meet the established system requirements while staying within the allocated budget.

Kansas began the project implementation by conducting joint application development sessions with representatives of several agencies including Kansas Department of Human Resources, Social & Rehabilitation Services, the Board of Regents and the Department of Housing and Commerce and non-profit organizations. This brought together representatives of programs including: Labor Exchange, WIA, Welfare to Work, TANF, Adult Basic Education, Carl Perkins, Community Service Block grant and Housing & Urban Development. Together, these representatives conducted a gap analysis of the existing program versus the assessed Kansas requirements. Fifty percent of the Joint Application Development (JAD) team members were front line staff who interact with Kansans seeking assistance. These sessions provided a strong customer voice in determining the final format of the Kansas application, kansasjoblink.com.

From there, Kansas developed a full online eligibility assessment for job seekers. This allows job seekers to quickly determine which programs they may be eligible for, read a short description of the services available and find the location of their nearest service provider. Kansas also collected data from job seekers and employers to ensure their previous unmet needs were addressed during the development process.

Kansas built three distinct methods for self-service customers to provide immediate feedback to the development team on the effectiveness of the application: Frequently Asked Questions, JobLink Success Stories, and direct e-mail. During the first three months of pilot and operational use, these avenues allowed the

development team to quickly identify and correct actual and perceived problems that affect customer use and to make rapid changes to increase its operational effectiveness. Over seventy-five changes were made to the application during the first three months of operation. Since that time, more than 300 additional improvements have been made to the system including a complete revision to the look and feel of the application to meet Section 508 requirements for accessibility.

A universal approach was used to develop the case management part of the application. The JAD team insured the system reflected common themes in case management and service delivery as opposed to program centric requirements. The result is a true one-stop case management system capable of cross-programmatic service delivery and providing single case files accessible by case managers from multiple agencies.

The Kansas JobLink system now makes up the core America's Job Link Alliance system that has been implemented in Nebraska and Oklahoma and coming soon to Vermont. Much of this success is due to the work of the Kansas Workforce Investment Partnership (KWIP) cross-agency team that included members from both technical and program sides of Kansas agencies including Human Resources, Social and Rehabilitation Services, Commerce and Housing, Education and Administration as well as the Board of Regents.

C. Use of Award Funds

Any grants awarded to the Alliance would be used to provide assistance to Alliance member states in providing staff training related to the deployment of AJL as a one-stop solution. With \$5,000 in award funds, a series of training guides could be developed. With \$25,000, AJLA-TS would be able to add a Meeting Center feature on the AJLA web site. The Meeting Center area would be a communications vehicle for AJLA states as well as other states who are considering using AJL as a one-stop solution. The Meeting Center will integrate data, voice, video, and multimedia PowerPoint presentations within a standard Web browser.

D. Project Results

Since the Alliance was formed in 2000, we've:

- Won the 2001 JETT*CON Technology@Work Award;
- Won the 2002 E-Gov Trailblazer Award;
- Won the 2002 Digital Government Award for Government Innovations;
- Won the 2002 Government Customer Support Excellence Award for Technical Excellence;
- Won the 2003 E-Gov Pioneer Award;
- Grown to an Alliance of 29 states - the largest such "alliance" in the nation;
- Implemented a self-service job matching and referral system for job seekers and employers online in Kansas, Nebraska and Oklahoma;
- Implemented and maintaining a WIA compliant case management operating system online in Kansas and Oklahoma;
- Assisted Vermont implement their own WIA compliant case management operating systems online;
- Put in place an agreement to share the maintenance of systems; and
- Completed production of an award-winning \$6 million unemployment insurance system which greatly enhances the number and quality of services Alliance members can offer employers over the Internet.

It is also important to look at the results on both a multi-state and a single-state basis.

The original development work on any such comprehensive system is extremely expensive because of the vast scope of the system. Unofficial word is that such one-stop operating systems have ranged from nearly \$20 million to in excess of \$40 million to develop. However, Kansas was able to implement the Kansas JobLink System for \$2.3 million and each subsequent state has implemented the system for progressively less money as stated in the synopsis.

Kansas has also implemented some Unemployment Insurance applications that link the UI program with the one-stop system. These applications are now available to all Alliance states to enhance and implement. Kansas invested \$6 million of its own resources to complete this work, which could mean millions in savings if additional states implement the modules.

Additionally, Kansas, Oklahoma and Vermont have joined together to provide maintenance of the JobLink system. This allows each state to pay \$200,000 per year or less instead of each state paying \$500,000 per year, resulting in a savings of \$300,000 per state per year into the foreseeable future.

The success of the America’s Job Link Alliance systems can also be measured on an individual state basis. As a result of implementing the Kansas JobLink system, there has been a tremendous increase of support from job seekers and employers in the sunflower state. Since Program Year 2000, there has been an increase in 2740 additional employers using the JobLink system – which is a 467% increase. Additionally, the number of registered jobseekers has almost gone up six-fold to more than 257,310 which is 5% of Kansas’ employment base.

Program Year 2000: Employers: 747 Job Seekers: 43899	Program Year 2001: Employers: 730 Job Seekers: 82015	Program Year 2002: Employers: 2010 Job Seekers: 131396
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Totals to Date:Employers: 3487 Job Seekers: 257310

The Kansas JobLink system also supports WIA principles in that it is Kansas State Government’s first computer application to provide comprehensive workforce development services across the boundaries of five state agencies. Kansasjoblink.com is the backbone of Kansas’ system of one-stop workforce development centers, and 70 federally funded workforce development programs. The JobLink software allows job seekers to come to a One-Stop Career Center, interact with any of the case managers - regardless of which state agency employs them - and receive services. Case managers no longer have to move from the Social and Rehabilitation Services’ system, to the Kansas Department of Human Resources (KDHR) system and back again to view pertinent information on a client.

This ability is particularly critical in rural Kansas and other rural Alliance states, where in many counties there are no Employment Service offices. In Kansas, KDHR customers can now go to the SRS office in their county to receive assistance; where before, residents in 82 of Kansas’ 105 counties were forced to travel to another county to visit a KDHR office. Now that SRS case managers have access to the same data as KDHR staff, the entire system becomes seamless, delivering better services and less frustration to those in need.

In Kansas, kansasjoblink.com replaced the Kansas Job Bank and the local JTPA systems. It also provides a self-service employment tool to complement the employment service components of the human services agency (Social and Rehabilitation Services) system. With SRS identified enhancements, the kansasjoblink.com may some day be able to provide much of the functionality currently provided by the KansasCares system.

Kansasjoblink.com also provides economic development capabilities to local areas through the use of the Career Information System. Kansasjoblink.com links to education by providing the ability to view and track an individual’s test scores across many areas. This allows education providers to better assess an individual’s abilities and avoid administering duplicate tests.