SECOND CHANCES, SAFER COUNTIES

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & REENTRY

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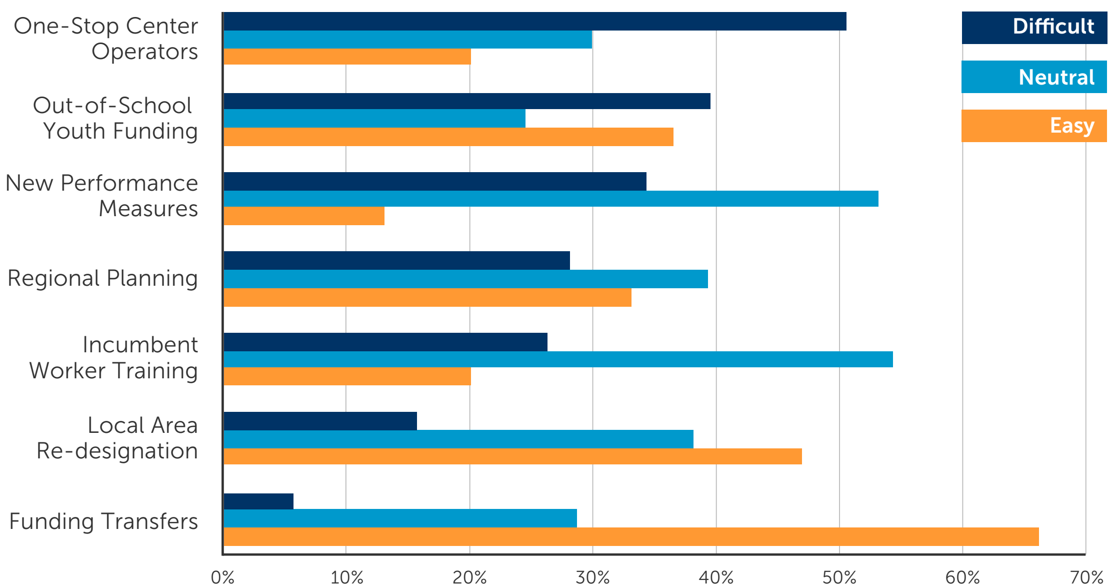
IMPLEMENTING WIOA: WHAT'S WORKING, WHAT'S CHALLENGING

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) maintains the core principle of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) to improve the U.S. workforce by focusing on occupational skills, employment, retention of employment and increased earnings. WIOA improves the aims of WIA by providing the needed funding and framework for a modernized, demand driven workforce development system. While it is too early to assess the successes and challenges of implementing WIOA, the results of the 2015 NACo survey provide some early indications of how local WDBs are faring in its implementation to date.

FIGURE 1. LOCAL WDBs' EXPERIENCE IMPLEMENTING WIOA PROVISIONS, PERCENT OF RESPONDING LOCAL WDBs, OCTOBER–NOVEMBER 2015



Source: NACo survey, October–November 2015.

Notes: The 2015 NACo survey asked local WDB executive directors to rate their experience to date using scaled responses. The scale used in the survey included five categories: very difficult, difficult, neutral, easy and very easy. The analysis combines "very difficult" and "difficult" into one category, which is labeled and reported as "difficult" in the graph and text. The analysis also combines "very easy" and "easy" into a single category, which is labeled and reported as "easy" in the graph and text.

To read the full report and the companion case studies, visit the Second Chances, Safer Counties website at: www.NACo.org/WorkforceAndReentry

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In replacing WIA, WIOA contains several provisions that have a direct impact on local WDBs and the ways in which the federal government's workforce investment supports and invests in workers and businesses in local areas. WIOA's new provisions include:

- Potential re-designation of local areas
- Regional planning across contiguous local areas
- Permitting up to 20 percent of Adult and Dislocated Worker funding to be reserved for incumbent worker training
- Permitting up to 100 percent of funding to be transferred between the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs in a program year
- Changing the indicators used to measure performance
- Requiring a competitive process to select one-stop center operators
- Requiring 75 percent of Youth funding to serve out-of-school youth

Based on the results of the 2015 NACo survey of local WDB executive directors, local WDBs are adapting to WIOA and implementing many of these provisions with relative ease, even that some provisions are more difficult to implement than others (See Figure 1). This analysis is a very early snapshot of how local WDBs are dealing with the implementation of some of WIOA's provisions. The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) will finalize the rules for implementing WIOA in 2016.

The competitive selection process of one-stop center operators is the most challenging of the WIOA provisions local WDBs are working to implement. A majority — 50 percent — of responding local WDBs indicated that selecting one-stop center operators using a competitive process is difficult. Difficulty in implementing this provision is most evident among local WDBs in medium-sized service areas, those with 500,000 to 1 million residents (53 percent), and small service areas that have fewer than 500,000 residents (51 percent). Larger service areas local WDBs — with more than 1 million residents — also report challenges with this provision (41 percent).

The respondent local WDBs are split on the level of difficulty to implement the WIOA provision that requires 75 percent of Youth WIOA funding to focus on workforce development for out-of-school youth. The increase in funding for out-of-school youth under WIOA is up from a minimum of 30 percent under WIA. Thirty-nine (39) percent of responding local WDBs indicated that it is difficult to implement this provision. At the same time, however, 36 percent of local WDBs reported that it is easy to implement this provision. Local WDBs in the larger service areas are more likely to report adapting to this provision with ease (47 percent of local WDBs in service areas with more than 1 million residents). Local WDBs with smaller service areas have higher difficulty; 41 percent of local WDBs in small service areas stated that the increase in out-of-school youth funding is difficult to implement.

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