

# Leading Oklahoma to a New Day, New Way

## Oklahoma Workforce Development System Certification

*Framework  
and Process  
Recommendations*

**DRAFT**

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July 19, 2012

**Leading Oklahoma to a New Day, New Way**  
**Oklahoma Workforce Development System Certification**  
*Implementation Framework and Process Recommendations*

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## INTRODUCTION

Today, employers and job seekers alike are plagued by a skills mismatch. To address this, businesses are focusing on four areas. They are striving to:

- retain their current talent,
- attract talent from other states and employers,
- create new talent via K-12 and higher education pipelines, and,
- expand the skills of current workers.

Communities that can create an effective ongoing talent pipeline that ensures there are workers with the right skills to meet the ever changing needs of employers can grow and remain competitive.

Currently, nine Oklahoma state agencies and multiple other entities are helping employers address each of these four areas. But for Oklahoma to have a truly world class workforce development (talent development) system, all nine state and other workforce development agencies must be working together to provide seamless and comprehensive services. They must go beyond being a “collection of hard working and effective individual agencies” and become an “efficient and effective **system**”. By doing so, they will not only support current employers but will also enhance the state’s business location, retention and expansion efforts.

The Governor’s Council for Workforce and Economic Development’s (GCWED) Workforce Systems Oversight Committee listened to employers and other stakeholders, recognized that this is a critical issue and mustered the political will to make strong recommendations that will lead to a fully effective system. The Governor and the agency directors who represent the various parts of the system recognized the short and the long term benefits that having such a comprehensive system would bring to Oklahoma. They recognized that a systemic approach would create not only a more effective service delivery approach for Oklahoma citizens and business, but a true competitive advantage for Oklahoma’s economic development efforts; thus meeting their strategic vision that ***“Oklahoma’s workforce development system increases profitability for businesses and increases income for all Oklahomans.”***

In creating this workforce development system, the directors must now look at the system holistically and then look at where their particular agency and its services fit into the larger vision. Then they must commit to jointly producing the tools and processes needed to implement a workforce system.

To help in this endeavor, as one of its strategies, the GCWED called for ***“the development of a Workforce Development Certification system with the anticipation of creating a “new***

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*normal” surrounding stellar customer focus. Certification of the system will be designed to ensure consistency throughout the system while encouraging local and regional adaptation.”*

#### Key Outcome and Reason for Workforce Development System Certification

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The key outcome of Workforce Development System Certification is to ensure that **“Oklahoma has a pipeline of appropriately skilled and credentialed workers ready to meet the employment needs of Oklahoma employers.”** The workforce development system will be designed to be the springboard to success for Oklahoma’s businesses and job seekers. The benefits to Oklahoma, its citizens and businesses are:

- Consistent, high-quality services to employers and job seekers throughout the state;
- User-friendly, customer-focused services;
- Alignment among education, workforce and economic development;
- Accountability for services and results;
- Maximization of all workforce development resources.

#### Purpose of this Document

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This document contains the Task Force’s recommendations for implementation of Oklahoma’s Workforce Development System Certification process and framework. The recommendations seek to provide a clear framework and path forward for the implementation of this certification system, and to offer a timeframe for implementation that sets a high bar but is simultaneously realistic about needs at various stages of the implementation process. The Task Force’s recommendations further seek to create an implementation framework that engages all partners in Oklahoma’s workforce development system, at all levels of the system, from the Governor’s Council on Workforce and Economic Development (GCWED) level to the front-line system service delivery level.

The system certification and standards:

- recognize the unique situation and features of workforce development in Oklahoma;
- recognize and build on the strengths already present in Oklahoma;
- ensure that the education, training and employment programs are connected and working to achieve common goals;

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- provide a forum and process for all partners and programs to have a presence and take part in state and regional workforce planning, leveraging and service delivery strategies development;
- ensure alignment with other transformational policy and practice initiatives; and,
- ensure that regional coordination and planning is done based on workforce areas or a combination of those areas.

### **Process to Develop the Certification System**

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In order to ensure that all partners within the workforce system have input and “buy-in” of the workforce development certification system, a Task Force was developed to create the framework, process and standards. This Task Force was comprised of state and local representatives from various agencies including the:

- Governors Council on Workforce and Economic Development (GCWED)
- Local Workforce Investment Boards and Staff (LWIBs)
- Oklahoma Adult Basic and Continuing Education (ABE)
- Oklahoma Department of Career and Technical Education (ODCTE)
- Oklahoma Department of Commerce (ODOC)
- Oklahoma Department of Human Services (DHS)
- Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS)
- Oklahoma Employment Security Commission (OESC)
- Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (Higher Regents)

The Task Force began by gathering and reviewing new, as well as currently held, customer feedback. The feedback came from job seekers accessing services from all agencies within the system, current and potential employers, and system stakeholders. This information, along with visioning about the “ideal” Workforce development system and its characteristics, assisted the Task Force to create not only the framework or process for system certification, but also the standards to be met in three categories:

- Employer Services
- Job Seeker Services, and
- Governance.

The entire development process – the steps, the manner in which they were carried out, and the outcomes sought – was designed to be positive. It was made clear from the outset that

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the system’s objective was not to “catch” or punish the workforce development systems in any way, but rather to ensure that each certified system meet a certain level of consistency and quality in its processes and interactions with customers and its governance practices. Although the framework for the system (items like who would have the authority to grant certification, the steps to certification, etc.) would not be discussed until some standards and measures were set, it was emphasized from the outset that system self-assessment, technical assistance to help each system achieve standards, and incentives for achieving certification would be the bywords for the system – not sanctions or penalties. It was also clear that systems would not be expected to “stand” for certification immediately, but rather that an agreed-upon phase-in period of outreach, education, self-assessment and technical assistance (where needed) would be provided.

It is important to be clear that this system of baseline standards that have been developed for regional systems in the areas of employer services, job seeker services, and system governance is intended to serve as the foundational standards. That is, these standards make up the “core” set of standards that will be used for certifying Oklahoma’s Workforce Development systems, and are designed to ensure a level of consistency in systems across the State. In addition, Local Workforce Investment Boards (LWIBS), which are charged with reviewing and certifying Centers in their workforce areas, may certainly add additional and/or higher foundational and continuous improvement standards for **Centers** to these foundational **system** standards in order to flexibly address local and regional goals, priorities, and areas of interest.

Further, while it is envisioned that the process for convening partners at the local level may begin with the LWIBs, certifying recommendations of One-Stop systems will be implemented and overseen by the GCWED Workforce Systems Oversight Committee, with final certification decisions made by the GCWED.

#### **Critical Support for the Implementation of the Certification Process**

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The Task Force has identified several areas in which it feels the State could play supporting roles that are critical to certification system implementation and to the ongoing certification process itself. The Task Force recognizes that LWIBs and systems themselves also have roles to play in supporting the following areas:

- ❖ Providing support for State-wide education, communication, and outreach efforts to build understanding and support for the certification system among all One-Stop system partners, at all levels of the system;
- ❖ Helping to identify the system Reviewer(s);
- ❖ Coordinating the delivery of basic training on the certification standards and process;

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- ❖ Assisting in the development of any tools and resources needed by systems and Reviewer(s), such as a system self-assessment tool, a system review protocol tool, and a system on-site review instrument;
- ❖ Creating a central repository online that would serve as the “warehouse” for all certification-related materials and resources;
- ❖ Creating and implementing the state and system wide web-based intake process (building on and focusing the Workforce Data Quality Initiative grant);
- ❖ Creating and implementing the state and system wide common orientation process with multiple access points;
- ❖ Coordinating certification incentives, rewards, and technical assistance for systems; and,
- ❖ Implementing any necessary adjustments to the certification system and process for continuous improvement over time.

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**Framework Development Contributors**

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A strong “thank you” is due to the following individuals who committed time, energy, visioning and hard work in their role as Task Force members: Ricki Kozumplik, Facillitator.

Jeane Burruss  
ODOC and Task Force Staff Support

Robyn Coman  
ODOC

Jarrood Cordova  
Higher Regents

Cody Cox  
OESC

Stephanie Curtis  
ABE

Karen Davidson  
WIB

Vikki Dearing  
ODOC

Sandy Elledge  
DHS

Bill Edwards  
WIB

Eddie Foreman  
WIB

Melinda Freundt  
DRS

Rob Gragg  
ODOC

Gilbert Hall  
GCWED and Workforce Systems Oversight  
Committee Chair

John Hawkins  
GCWED private sector member

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Tina Lindsay  
ODOC

Kerry Manning  
WIB

Donnalla Miller  
GCWED, Workforce Systems Oversight Committee  
member, and Task Force Chair

Jennifer Miller  
WIB

Norma Noble  
ODOC

Kathie Price  
WIB

Nanette Robertson  
WIB

Kent Roof  
ODCTE

DeDe Smith  
OESC

Scott Smith  
ODCTE

Sherrain Steele  
OESC

Lisa Thomas  
WIB

Marshall Vogts  
ODOC

Terry Watson  
ODOC

Connie Lake  
Higher Regents

Linda Emrich  
ODOC

## 1. Certification of *Systems* versus *Centers*

Although many states are creating certification systems and processes to certify *Centers*, the GCWED has chosen to focus on the certification of workforce development *systems*. The Task Force spent a large amount of time discussing the difference between workforce development centers and systems. The Task Force discussed that a One Stop or Workforce Development Center is the “comprehensive physical location that houses multiple workforce development partners”; whereas the system is the “network of mandatory and optional partners, programs, centers and service providers that collectively address the community’s workforce development needs”. The Task Force also was concerned that community perception states there is no difference between workforce development centers or systems, and, that the centers were the responsibility of only one or two of the partner agencies.

As discussed in the Introduction section, individual workforce development agencies working alone or towards disaggregate goals cannot effectively address all of the workforce needs within the community. Creating a globally competitive community requires the close collaboration of all of the workforce development agencies, working together towards

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common goals, based on a unified plan created to address the skills requirements of employers that are key to community growth and prosperity. Focusing only on one or two agencies that may be co-located within one building or facility, such as a One Stop or Workforce Development Center will not be comprehensive enough. Therefore, this system certification evaluates how well all partners are working together to create a talent pipeline to assist employers to grow and prosper.

#### **GCWED Definition of System**

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The GCWED Workforce Systems Oversight Committee’s definition states: “A workforce **system** is the interaction of education, workforce and economic development. It includes organizations and entities that help Oklahoma citizens to obtain appropriate skills and credentials that will support business location, business expansion and business retention efforts.” As the number and types of workforce development organization varies from community to community, and workforce region to workforce region, the Task Force did not prescribe a minimum list of “required” agencies that must be a part of the system. They do recommend that each system determine which local agencies are a part of their workforce development system.

For Oklahoma’s system certification process, the Task Force recommends that systems requesting to be certified can be comprised of agencies within a designated workforce area, across multiple workforce areas, and even those that go across state boundaries.

#### **Requirements to be Met for System Certification**

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To be certified during this initial process, a system must meet all (100%) of the foundational standards for job seeker services, employer services, and governance. The Task Force recommended that the certification system be based on continuous improvement. Therefore, to be certified in future years, there will be continuous improvement levels that will need to be met for systems to retain their certification status. These continuous improvement levels will be developed during the pilot or full implementation phases, but will not be required until a future re-certification cycle.

Systems that achieve all of the higher continuous improvement standards prior to their being required will presumably be eligible for additional recognition and rewards.

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## **2. Certification Duration**

Once certified, a system carries its certification status for two years before the next certification period begins. Systems will be required to conduct a self-assessment against certification requirements at the mid-point (i.e. 12 months) of the certification “life.” Local Workforce Investment Boards will be responsible for reconvening the participating partners to ensure the system within their workforce area conducts a self-assessment at the certification mid-point and acts accordingly on self-assessment results (which may include obtaining technical assistance support from the state).

A key principle expressed in the certification standards is that regional systems will conduct ongoing self-assessment in order to identify any needs for improvement and respond appropriately. Accordingly, throughout the two-year certification period, regional systems will be expected to self-monitor against the standards and quickly address issues such as customer complaints/poor customer feedback; poor performance against shared system goals; and loss of partners’/programs’ participation within the system.

## **3. Certification Authority**

The Workforce Systems Oversight Committee will have the authority and the responsibility for recommendations to the Governor’s Council for Workforce and Economic Development (GCWED) who will certify workforce development systems within the state. The Committee will also have responsibility for assembling and assigning the Certification Reviewer(s) to review regional systems that are applying for certification. System Certification Reviewer(s) are discussed further in Section 5 on page 13.

## **4. System Self-Assessment Process**

The Task Force is recommending that the certification process include a pre-application phase for systems to conduct self-assessments against the certification standards and measures. Self-assessment is one of the most important and productive components of the certification process, as it serves multiple purposes beyond assessment alone. It creates an opportunity to bring all system partners together to engage in meaningful dialogue and exchange, and thus serves as a learning and education activity for system partners. As they engage collaboratively in the self-assessment process, partners should take the opportunity to fully map system services and resources and identify areas of duplication and inefficiency to address. Self-assessment results also serve as the basis for the system’s “corrective action” and continuous improvement planning prior to entering the certification application process. At the State level, systems’ self-assessment results could be aggregated to identify common and widespread areas of need and then prioritize statewide technical assistance support accordingly.

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The Task Force envisions the self-assessment process as a thoughtful and comprehensive effort – not a “check the box” exercise – but does not want the self-assessment process or the self-assessment tool to be cumbersome. The self-assessment tool itself, which needs to be developed, should obviously map clearly to the certification standards and measures for employer services, job seeker services, and workforce development system governance, and should provide the basis for the review instrument used by the Reviewer(s). It should include examples of “evidence” or documentation that systems should look for to determine whether they have achieved the standards. It should also include areas for recording technical assistance needs and plans and action steps for improvement.

The Task Force also wants to ensure that all workforce development system partners are able to provide input on the tool before it is finalized. The Task Force has also recommended that the draft self-assessment tool, once it is developed, be piloted in one or two regional systems as part of the implementation process. Ideally, the tool would be piloted with a larger/more urban system and a smaller/more rural system. Pilot results would then inform any adjustments or enhancements needed to ensure the usefulness of the self-assessment tool.

## 5. Certification Application, Review, Recommendation, and Approval Processes

The Task Force recommends that implementation of Oklahoma’s workforce development system certification be a phased effort that takes place over the course of two years, beginning on October 1, 2012 and rolling out in alignment with the program year calendar (July 1 – September 30). The suggested implementation phases and timeframes are as follows:

- ❖ Year 1 – Baseline/Self-Assessment Year (October 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013): Outreach, education, and training; some systems request and are chosen to be a pilot; all systems begin conducting self-assessment against the standards; systems apply for and receive any necessary technical assistance to help them meet the standards. This is also the timeframe for LWIBs to begin to adopt the foundational standards and develop higher or additional standards **specific to Centers**, at their discretion.
- ❖ Year 2 – Standards Adoption Year (July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2014): Throughout Year 2, systems will begin to implement the piloted and updated certification standards and process according to their readiness. Systems will not be required to implement system certification exactly on July 1, 2013. Rather, they may take any additional time they need during Year 2 to meet the foundational standards, and help Centers meet additional LWIB created standards. However, all systems will be expected to be certified no later than June 30, 2014.

The remainder of this section discusses the proposed processes for systems to apply for certification, for Certification Reviewer(s)’ review of systems, the Workforce Systems

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Oversight Committee's review and recommendation for certification and for the GCWED granting of certification to systems (all in the Year 2 Standards Adoption Year).

Please see the certification preparation and application/review timelines at the end of this document (pages 21 and 22) for a concise rendering of recommended system implementation phases and timeframes.

#### **Intent to Apply for Certification**

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For reasons discussed further below, the Task Force recommends that systems have the opportunity to apply for certification during two "windows" during the second (implementation) year, in October and April. In order to help the Workforce Systems Oversight Committee anticipate the number of systems that might be applying during either of these two certification cycles, and to assemble and staff an appropriate number of Certification Reviewer(s), the Task Force recommends that systems be asked to submit notification of their intent to apply for certification in an upcoming cycle to the Workforce Systems Oversight Committee. Systems that intend to seek certification in the cycle beginning in October would be asked to submit their intent to apply no later than September; systems intending to seek certification in the cycle beginning in April would submit their intent to apply no later than March.

If, after submitting its intent to apply, a system decided not to pursue certification in that cycle, it would simply need to withdraw its notification or otherwise notify the Workforce Systems Oversight Committee, and would not be penalized.

#### **Certification Application Package**

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The Task Force has developed the following recommendations regarding the application package. The Task Force feels strongly that that, following submission of their intent to apply for certification, all system partners should work collaboratively to develop their certification application package. In order to request a certification application review, a system should submit, at a minimum, the following components to the Workforce Systems Oversight Committee:

- a. A completed certification application request, jointly signed by locally-determined designees of all system partners (it is desired that the application request be a writeable, online form);
- b. An assessment of the region, including the key industry clusters for the region, the workforce development needs of those key employers (or a plan to identify them),

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and a plan for how the system will address those identified needs for the following two year period,

- c. A functional system service and resource map;
- d. A functional memorandum of understanding signed by all partners;
- e. A plan identifying how the system partners will collectively continuously monitor the needs of both the employers and job seeker customers and use them in their planning process; and,
- f. The complete results of the system's pre-certification self-assessment, which should include any relevant discussion of how any deficiencies identified during the initial self-assessment have been addressed in advance of the certification review.

Systems should also be encouraged to submit any additional material that may assist the Reviewer(s) in its preparation for the certification review as part of its certification application package. Submitting additional relevant materials increases the amount that the Certification Reviewer(s) can accomplish prior to the on-site visit and thereby increase efficiency and production while on-site. It will also reduce the Certification Reviewer(s) pre-visit desk review burden and enhance their familiarity with the system and the regional workforce area. These materials may include the system's strategic plan, business/operations plan, a sample of recent employer and job seeker customer feedback, and/or other documents.

The Task Force strongly recommends that the process for submitting the application package to the Workforce Systems Oversight Committee be electronic, rather than paper-based. They also recommend that the application package can be posted in an ongoing manner during the self evaluation phase.

### **Certification Application Process**

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In order to best organize and manage the certification review process and minimize burden on systems and on the Certification Reviewer(s), the Task Force recommends that applications for system certification be accepted two times during the full implementation (and any subsequent recertification) years, ideally in October and in April. (Should the Workforce Systems Oversight s wish to accept certification applications in months other than October and April, the Task Force asks that they ensure that One-Stop systems have at least two opportunities every two years to apply for certification/re-certification.) This creates a predictable schedule that all stakeholders can anticipate and prepare for appropriately. It also gives systems that apply for certification but do not successfully obtain it an opportunity to work on improvement and then re-apply.

It is also recommended that the certification application process discussed below take place after the systems conduct a formal self-assessment, receive any needed technical assistance,

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and have had the opportunity to take any necessary additional actions to prepare for certification.

- a. The One-Stop system submits its intent to apply for certification to the Workforce Systems Oversight Committee.
- b. The system submits its certification application package, discussed above, to the Workforce Systems Oversight Committee. The Workforce Systems Oversight Committee reviews the application for thoroughness and completeness, and requests any needed additional information from the system.
- c. The Workforce Systems Oversight Committee then assembles and assigns a Certification Reviewer(s) (see Reviewer(s) composition and selection discussions, below) to conduct the system's certification review.
- d. The Workforce Systems Oversight Committee works collaboratively with the system and the assigned Certification Reviewer(s) to coordinate a certification review schedule (includes pre-visit desk review as well as on-site review) that is agreeable to all stakeholders in the process.

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## **Certification Reviewer(s)**

### *Composition of Reviewer(s)*

The Task Force has briefly discussed whether the Reviewer(s) should be an individual, or a team of individuals. They have also briefly discussed whether the Reviewer(s) should be stakeholders that represent key partners in the Workforce development system or, individuals that may not be familiar with the Workforce development system but are knowledgeable of quality and continuous improvement programs such as Baldrige. Once the Task Force has had sufficient time to complete this discussion, a final recommendation on this topic will be brought forward to the Workforce Systems Oversight Committee for review and submittal to the GCWED.

### *Reviewer Selection Process*

As noted above, the Workforce Systems Oversight Committee has the authority and responsibility for appointing Certification Reviewer(s) when a system has submitted their certification application. Once the Task Force has made a recommendation on whether the Reviewer(s) should be an individual or a team, they will address the selection process. In any event, the Task Force was adamant that the Reviewer(s) should not be a part of the regional system that is to be reviewed.

### *Level of Effort*

Between preparation for the on-site system review, the on-site review itself, and follow-up activities, it is estimated that Certification Reviewer(s) could devote as much as 30-50 hours

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of work to each system review (this estimate does not include time for training of Certification Reviewer(s)). Given that level of effort, the Task Force recommends that there be a sufficient number of Reviewer(s) to meet potential demand for system reviews at any given time, and to ensure that Reviewer(s) are not overburdened. The recommended requirement for systems to submit “intent to apply” notification is designed to assist the Workforce Systems Oversight Committee in gauging needs for Reviewer(s) staffing and capacity.

#### ***Training for Reviewer(s)***

A core concern is that the Certification Reviewer(s) be well-trained, impartial, objective, fair, and consistent in their application of the standards over time. Ensuring “quality control” State-wide will be essential. To those ends, the Task Force believes that it is critical that Certification Reviewer(s) receive basic training in certification system principles and objectives; the certification standards; and certification review and recommendation protocol, tools, and processes. In addition, the Task Force recommends that training for Reviewer(s) also include some level of education on all system partners (as needed), as well as coverage of ethics and confidentiality expectations for Reviewer(s).

Regarding how the training could be delivered most feasibly and effectively, the Task Force recommends a blended training model in which as much of the training as is feasible is completed online, and the remainder is delivered in-person. An additional key principle here is that training should simulate the elements of the actual desk review and on-site review processes to the fullest extent possible.

#### **Certification Review, Recommendation, and Approval Processes**

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The Certification Reviewer(s) will receive the system’s certification application package from the Workforce Systems Oversight Committee with enough advance notice for it to review the package thoroughly and conduct expected supplementary research prior to its on-site system visit. The Workforce Systems Oversight Committee will be responsible for ensuring on-site review scheduling coordination between the system and the assigned Reviewer(s).

The One-Stop System review and certification recommendation process should include the following principles and activities:

- a. The Certification Reviewer(s) should be responsible for conducting a desk review (based on the system’s application package) and supplementary research on the applying system and its local workforce area in advance of its on-site visit. This desk review should be conducted within 30 days following receipt of the system’s certification application package.
- b. The Reviewer(s) on-site visit should make up the majority of the certification review. The on-site visit and certification recommendation report should be completed within 30 days

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following the desk review. The Task Force expresses its wish that the on-site review be as minimally disruptive to system operations as possible and that, if possible, the review take place in one full day (though the Task Force also acknowledges that the on-site review could require more than one day). The on-site review should include, at a minimum:

- i. A “walk-through” of various parts of the System, as a customer might experience the service delivery “flow” and referrals;
  - ii. Interviews with system staff, including all system partners and including personnel from the management level to the front-line service delivery level;
  - iii. Interviews with a sample of employer and job seeker customers;
  - iv. A review of the system’s general materials; outreach and orientation materials, media, and activities; workshop and meeting offerings; and system (and Center) calendars (as appropriate);
  - v. A review of the system’s facilities, layout, and infrastructure, with an eye toward customer accessibility and customer flow; and,
  - vi. Any additional on-site review needed to validate status against the certification standards, including review of system governance policies and practices, training and professional development plans and activities, customer feedback mechanisms, etc.
- c. The Certification Reviewer(s) should meet immediately following the on-site review to come to consensus on its observations, identify any additional information required to make a certification recommendation, and define preliminary recommendations.
  - d. The Reviewer(s) should be prepared to conduct a de-brief/exit interview with key system management and staff to share its findings and recommendations as quickly as possible. The Task Force noted its preference for an in-person de-brief on the day after the on-site review; however, depending upon travel needs and funding, the de-brief could potentially be held virtually. The chief concern here is that the system be briefed on the Reviewer(s) observations as quickly as possible following the on-site review.
  - e. If the Reviewer(s) determines that it needs additional information or has follow-up questions, it should re-connect with the system by phone or email as quickly as possible following the site visit.
  - f. The Certification Reviewer(s) should collaboratively prepare its formal recommendation in writing immediately following the system site visit, and submit that recommendation simultaneously to the system and the Workforce Systems Oversight Committee. The recommendation should be submitted no later than 30 days following receipt of the system’s certification application package and the on-site system review. Should the

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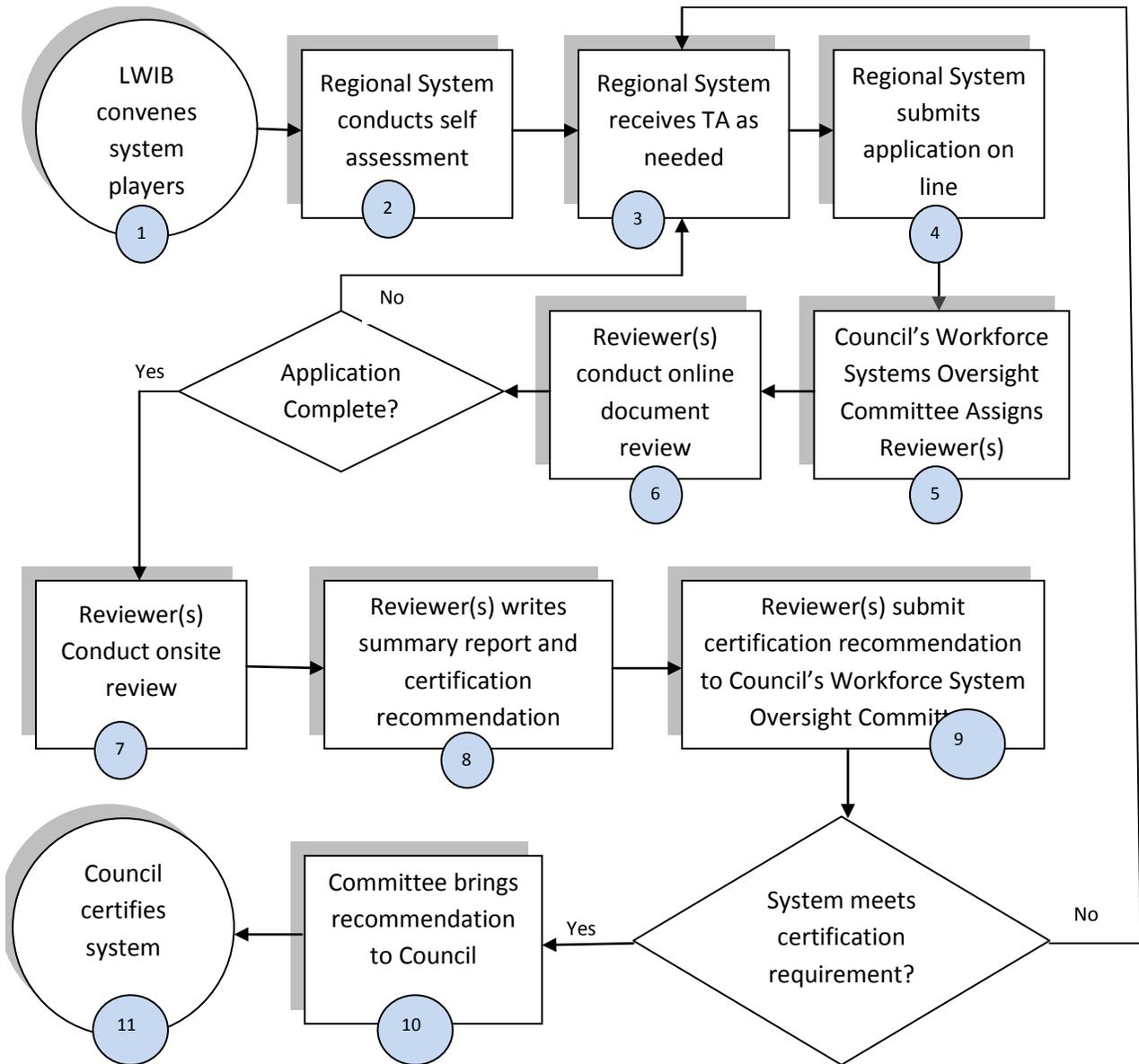
system not meet the requirements for certification, the notification should include detailed and specific recommendations for improvement and technical assistance.

- g. The Workforce Systems Oversight Committee will be responsible for considering the Certification Reviewer(s)' recommendations at its next meeting after receiving the recommendation from the Certification Reviewer(s). If the Workforce Systems Oversight Committee decides to recommend certification to the GCWED, the Committee's recommendation decision will be shared with the GCWED for its action at the next GCWED meeting
- h. The GCWED's certification decision should be made and formally shared with the applying system within 15 days following submission of the Workforce Systems Oversight Committee's formal, written recommendation at the GCWED meeting.
  - i. Because the system certification review process is designed to support continuous improvement and to ensure the provision of needed technical assistance – giving systems the support they need to achieve the standards – it is not expected that systems will formally appeal the Workforce Systems Oversight Committee's certification recommendations or GCWED's certification decision with any frequency. However, should a system have a concern with the process followed by the Reviewer(s) or the Committee in making a decision about system certification, or the GCWED's certification decision, it would have an avenue for appeal to the GCWED (or the GCWED's state-level designee). It is important to emphasize that the GCWED would only be involved in an appeals process were a system to question the certification recommendation and decision-making process, not the decision.
  - ii. Should a system not meet the standards for certification, it may re-apply in the next certification cycle.

Following is the flowchart outlining the process that was just described.

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**System Re-Certification**

Because the Task Force was focused on developing the recommended framework for implementation of Oklahoma's One-Stop System certification system, it did not spend a

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significant amount of time discussing the recommended process for re-certification of systems following expiration of the systems' initial two-year certification. However, in broad discussions on this topic, the Task Force decided that the certification process described here would be the same one followed for system re-certification. Further, the Task Force recommends that in order to obtain re-certification, systems should be required to demonstrate that they are following continuous improvement processes. Finally, the Task Force recommends that prior to the first round of system re-certification, the GCWED reconvene the One-Stop Certification Task Force to re-examine the standards and measures and refresh them as necessary for purposes of continuous improvement; addressing changes in law, regulations, or policy; and other relevant areas.

## 6. Certification Incentives and Rewards

The Task Force stressed the importance of Oklahoma using incentives and rewards to encourage systems to become certified and to continuously improve, and encouraging and supporting peer-to-peer and other types of technical assistance to assist systems in achieving certification. The following incentives and rewards have been identified as important components of the One-Stop System certification framework and process:

- ❖ Specific recognition for staff **from all agencies within** the certified system, in addition to recognition of the systems themselves:
  - Staff appreciation awards (bonuses for staff, paid time off, "award" items, etc.)
  - Identification of certification award on staff name badges
  - Employee of the month recognition
- ❖ Priority for incentive funding **from all partner funding sources** for certified systems
- ❖ Priority consideration for special funding, grants, etc. **from all partner funding sources** for certified Systems
- ❖ Public acknowledgement of systems receiving certification:
  - State/LWIB recognition
    - Could include State- or locally-hosted luncheons or other events
  - Media coverage and promotion of systems
- ❖ Award systems with new equipment, supplies, and/or resources, e.g.,
  - Faster computers; better furniture; LCDs/projectors; smartboards; system offices renovations; marketing support; support for developing resources such as videos, materials, etc.
- ❖ Visible award in system offices: plaque, window decal, banner, etc.

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- ❖ Recognition of system certification on all partner State and local websites

The Task Force recommends that systems that attain foundational continuous improvement standards be eligible for additional recognition and rewards. The State and Oklahoma's LWIBs should explore how to identify and reward specific **Centers** that attain higher continuous improvement standards as established by individual LWIBs (beyond the foundational standards).

## 7. Certification Technical Assistance

Systems and their local workforce areas feel strongly that technical assistance is a key need for both being able to meet foundational One-Stop Certification standards and being able to advance through continuous improvement. These technical assistance needs might be identified during the self-assessment period, the Reviewer(s) visit, or at any other time.

It is strongly recommended that State-level One-Stop certification technical assistance funding/resources not be allocated solely on a "first come, first served" basis or on a "flat" basis (i.e. each system receives the same amount of funding). Rather, the Task Force recommends that technical assistance resources be distributed in large part on the basis of plans detailing need, based on the self-assessment, and on applications submitted by systems/local workforce areas. The Task Force also recognizes that technical assistance is, in part, a local responsibility, and acknowledges that systems and LWIBs have a responsibility to identify any available local funding and other resources that can be used to address technical assistance needs.

Desired methods and resources for technical assistance include:

- ❖ Training/funding for identified training needs: customer service, partner cross-training, career counseling/advising, service or resource mapping, identification of employer skills requirements and/or needs
- ❖ Support for site visits from systems that are achieving the standards, as well as site visits to those systems
- ❖ Support for visits to high-performing systems in other states
- ❖ Recommended strategies and resources for improvement and sharing of best practices
- ❖ Consultative assistance from internal partners as well as external resources: Help from the "inside," as well as help from the "outside," in meeting the standards
- ❖ Support for delivering services that systems can't currently deliver themselves and for sharing resources to maximize offerings
- ❖ Distinguished Workforce Professional model: State hires workforce experts to go on-site to consult with local areas/systems for a limited period of "residence"
- ❖ Support for customer flow analysis/consulting

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## **8. Certification System Phase-In Steps and Timeframe**

The Task Force recommends that the phased implementation of the certification system begin no later than October 1, 2012, following presumed GCWED adoption of the certification framework in August 2012 and the certification standards in October 2012.

As discussed earlier in this document, it is envisioned that implementation of Oklahoma's One-Stop system certification will be a phased effort that takes place over the course of two years, beginning on October 1, 2012 and rolling out in alignment with the program year calendar (July 1 – June 30). The implementation phases and timeframes are as follows:

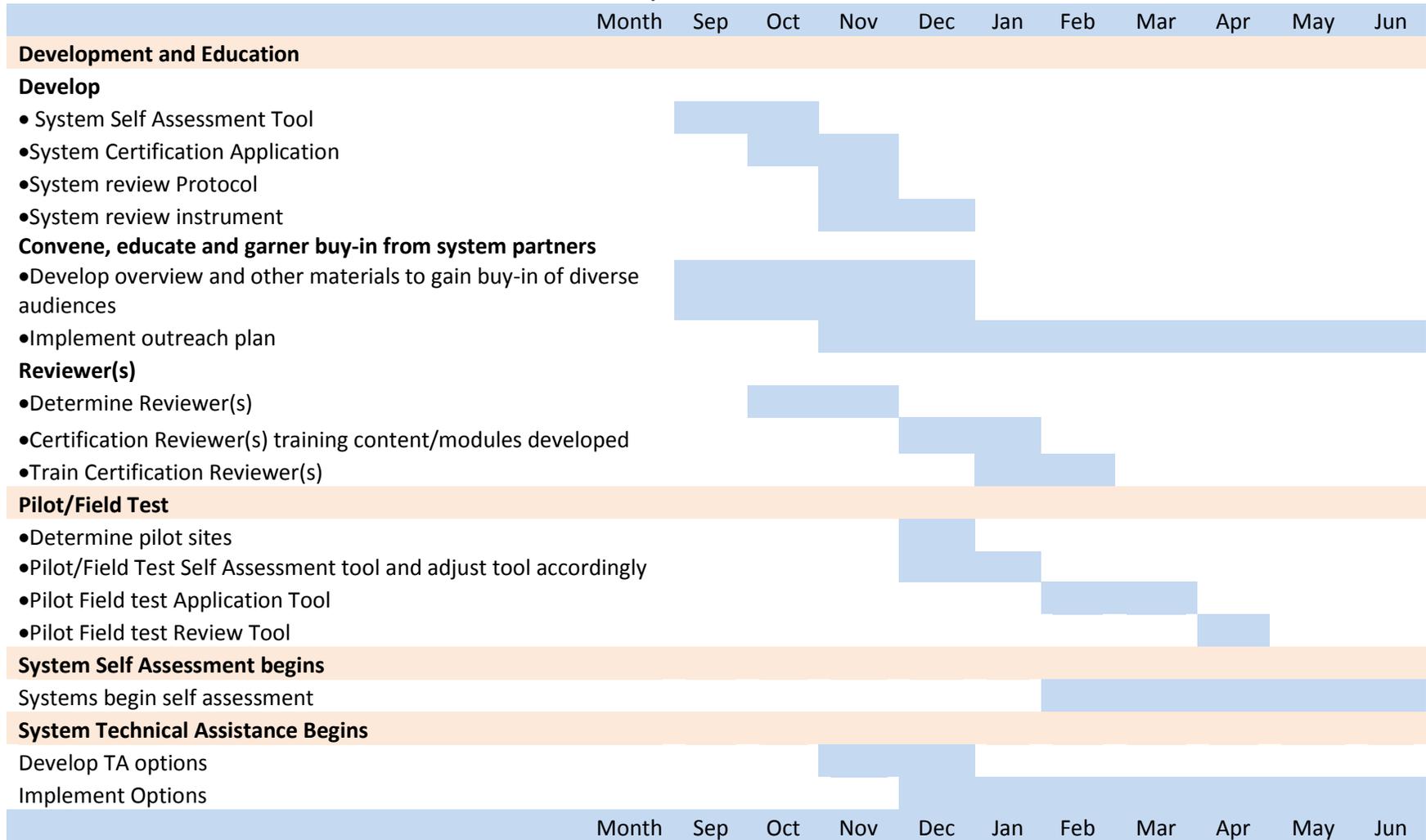
- ❖ Year 1: Baseline/Self-Assessment Year (October 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013)
- ❖ Year 2: Standards Adoption Year (July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2014)

The recommended timelines that follow depict: (1) the tasks and timeframes associated with preparation for implementation of the One-Stop System certification system in Year 1; and (2) the tasks and timeframes associated with the actual certification application submission and review process.

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**DRAFT**

**Year 1 Implementation Timeline**



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**System Application Submission and Review**



## ADDENDUM

### **Materials Core Team Requested for Development by the State**

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There are a number of tools the Task Force recommended that the State take primary (but not sole) responsibility for creating to facilitate the implementation process. These are discussed throughout this draft, and are summarized here. They fall into three broad categories:

- ❖ Materials to assist Task Force members, GCWED and Workforce Systems Oversight Committee members, and others to build understanding and support for the Certification system;
- ❖ Materials to help systems self-assess their readiness to go through the certification process, and to assist Certification Reviewer(s) in actually carrying out their duties; and
- ❖ Materials to train Reviewer(s) to carry out their responsibilities.

**Building Support:** The Task Force felt strongly that the State provide support for building full understanding of the objectives and elements of the certification system. In a word, agency heads and others must get behind and champion the system and own the effort “vertically,” boardroom to mailroom.

While Task Force members understand that much of their own responsibility as certification system champions would be carried out organically in their day-to-day interactions with colleagues, supervisors, and partners, they also felt that their own efforts, as well as the efforts of others, would benefit from expert production of materials, presentations, talking points, and more as part of a planned, coordinated effort to build understanding and support. The Task Force recommends that multiple avenues to educating stakeholders be pursued, including meetings throughout the State, virtual communications, and integration of the certification message in related activities.

The Task Force felt strongly about three particular aspects of materials and process development:

- ❖ Messaging must be consistent; that is, all stakeholders throughout the State need to hear the same messages at about the same times in a well-planned and coordinated approach;
- ❖ The ability to demonstrate “What’s in it for me?” to various cohorts is key; and
- ❖ All communications should be clear, concise, easy to follow, and tailored for various audiences.

**Assessment Tools:** Page 9 of the “Implementation Framework and Process Recommendations” draft contains a detailed discussion of the self-assessment process and tool that systems would use to assess their status against the certification standards and identify any needed technical assistance. The self-assessment tool should provide the basis for the review instrument used by the Certification Reviewer(s).

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The Task Force wanted to emphasize that the tool should include examples of “evidence” or documentation that systems and Reviewer(s) should look for to determine whether the standards have been achieved. It should also include areas for recording technical assistance needs and plans and action steps for improvement, whether those items become apparent during the self-assessment process or the review process.

**Reviewer(s) Training Materials:** Since it is important that the certification standards be applied uniformly and fairly, and that the certification process be carried out consistently throughout the State, the Task Force emphasized that the State should support the development of materials and processes for training Certification Reviewer(s). Details of those suggested materials may be found in the discussion on page 14 of the “Implementation Framework and Process Recommendations” draft.