

# **Local Workforce Investment Area 7 Tennessee Career Center at Cookeville Organizational Profile**

## **I. Organizational Description**

The Tennessee Career Center at Cookeville is the only comprehensive Career Center within Local Workforce Investment Area 7 (LWIA 7). Partners with staff located at the Tennessee Career Center at Cookeville include programs authorized under Title I of the Workforce Investment Act; programs authorized under Wagner-Peyser; Adult Education; programs authorized under the Rehabilitation Act; Senior Community Service Employment Programs; Trade Adjustment Assistance Programs; Veterans Services; and Unemployment Insurance Programs, hereafter referred to as “the partners”. The twelve counties included in LWIA 7 are Cannon, Clay, Dekalb, Fentress, Jackson, Macon, Overton, Pickett, Putnam, Smith, Van Buren, and White. Affiliate centers where at least one partner has co-located staff are Dekalb, Fentress, Macon, Smith, and White counties. The six remaining counties have full-time staff and have the ability to provide many of the services through internet or other technologies. This one-stop model allows individuals and employers to leverage resources to receive the highest level of service. The primary customers of the Career Centers are jobseekers and employers. Career Center operations are governed by each partner organization through their respective policies and procedures. A consortium consisting of representatives of each partner organization guides daily operations and meets regularly to report on activities and discuss efforts to improve services. Services to jobseekers include labor market information; access to jobs through internet listings; job referrals; access to internet based remediation software; testing and assessments; Career Readiness Certificate testing; career counseling, assistance with job training; assistance with General Educational Development Diploma attainment; and other types of assistance needed for employment. Other services available include Unemployment Insurance benefits; Trade Adjustment Assistance; Rehabilitation Services; and other support services such as child care assistance and travel assistance. Services to employers include recruiting and testing for job applicants; screening; incumbent worker training; apprenticeship training; on-the-job training; and other services.

It is the goal of all partners at the Tennessee Career Center at Cookeville to provide a seamless delivery of services to jobseekers and employers. We are market driven, service oriented, and collaborative in our efforts with customers, partners, and the community. The mission of the Tennessee Career Center at Cookeville is to meet the needs of all customers in our LWIA by providing services offered by all partners at one physical location. The vision of the Tennessee Career Center at Cookeville is to be the one-stop source of service for jobseekers and employers.

The Tennessee Career Center at Cookeville, along with affiliate centers in LWIA 7, employs a diverse workforce. Employees’ educational levels range from high school graduates through college graduate degrees. The diverse educational levels combined

with varied work histories of employees form a unique collaboration which facilitates more effective services to our customers.

Each co-located partner agency in the Tennessee Career Center at Cookeville is responsible for all job descriptions and duties within their respective agencies. This responsibility includes health and/or safety requirements. The Workforce Investment Act of 1998, which created the Tennessee Career Center System, provides the governing guidelines for the day-to-day operation. The Tennessee Career Center at Cookeville is subject to both state and federal regulations which bind program requirements through both government entities. The Workforce Investment Act component of the Center is subject to an annual independent financial audit as well as monitoring by the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

All Tennessee Career Center at Cookeville staff are equipped with computers and/or laptops for training and/or data entry purposes. In addition, the Center provides a resource room with computers which are available to customers for resume writing, job search, and educational use. Each agency partner is responsible for purchasing hardware and software for its' individual program needs. Partnering agencies have access to common links in technology which affords support for the overall Career Center organization. An example is the electronic Case Management and Activity Tracking System (eCMATS), which serves as a common data system for most agencies.

The Tennessee Career Center at Cookeville has a unique governance system. The Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency (UCHRA), which operates the Tennessee Career Center at Cookeville, was designated as the Administrative Entity for WIA programs in LWIA 7. The UCHRA is governed by a Board of Directors which includes Chief Local Elected Officials (CLEOs), human resource representatives, etc. In addition, the CLEOs appoint members to the LWIA 7 Local Workforce Investment Board (LWIB), and this board oversees the WIA programs. The UCHRA Employment and Training Division staff perform the daily WIA activities for the LWIB. Although the center is mandated by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, each partner shares in the cost and daily operation of the Career Center through a contractual Resource Sharing Agreement. All partners report to their respective agencies and adhere to different policies and procedures, performance standards, reporting requirements, and roles and responsibilities. However, the Career Center partners, with guidance from the Tennessee Career Center at Cookeville Consortium, work to provide a seamless system to provide the best customer service to the jobseekers and employers in LWIA 7. The Consortium meets at least quarterly to share specific program data, best practices, and ways to better serve our customers without duplication.

Key customers and market segments of the Tennessee Career Center at Cookeville in LWIA 7 are job seekers and individuals seeking education and training opportunities, unemployment claims, vocational rehabilitation services, veteran's services, and employers seeking qualified job applicants. Stakeholders include the Career Center partners, Local Workforce Investment Board, Federal, State and Local Government, non-profit organizations, training institutions, and Career Center employees.

Providing numerous services as listed above to customers at one convenient location saves both time and cost for customers and stakeholders. Federal and State Governments direct the focus of employees and partners toward building and sharing knowledge throughout the Career Center organization. Therefore, a network is created among partners that will result in a sustainable organization providing professional and well-trained employees to implement programs funded.

Our most important partners and collaborators are federal and state agencies and entities that receive funding from them or are regulated by them. Private sector business representatives and local elected officials are also important partners and collaborators. The role of federal and state governmental agencies includes funding the Tennessee Career Center at Cookeville, providing regulatory oversight, and acting in partner or collaborative roles. The role of private sector business representatives and local elected officials is to collaborate and advise on Career Center activities, policy issues, and to serve on boards or in an advisory capacity.

Employers, training providers, local chambers of commerce, and state governmental agencies together drive our innovation process. The dynamics of change in our employer base sometimes requires that our labor force be trained in new technologies or methodologies. Our training providers must adapt to these new technologies and methodologies quickly and thoroughly so our labor force can receive quality training that will prepare them to fulfill employer needs. This focus on our workforce area, in collaboration with our partners, gives us a proactive environment that will enable us to achieve our short and long term goals. This is also an important negotiation factor when state and local government agencies and chambers of commerce communicate with businesses that are seeking to locate in our workforce area.

Our supply chain requirements involves funding levels at both the federal and state level, job availability, state approved training providers, a customer base seeking employment or to improve their employment status, and an economically viable employer base. Funding cuts limit our ability to serve job seekers or those seeking to improve their employment status through training. Dislocations or plant closures will also impact our efforts because we will see larger numbers of dislocated workers at the Tennessee Career Center at Cookeville location inquiring about Unemployment Insurance, seeking employment, or seeking training to improve their prospects of being promoted or selected for employment in a different field.

Our key customer partnering and communication mechanism are internet based resources such as the UCHRA, TDLWD, Tennessee Career Center at Cookeville, and the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) websites and others, as well as our physical facilities. Also, the Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefit process and other customer associated processes would expose those customers to the Tennessee Career Center at Cookeville. There are also Workforce Employer Outreach Committee (WEOC) meetings in the different counties of LWIA 7, which encourages economic development, promotes departmental services, facilitates the distribution of policies and information, and improves awareness of the capabilities of the one-stop career center system. Many different programs that the Tennessee Career Center at Cookeville provides are presented by a keynote speaker at these meetings which helps

to communicate the available programs. These communication mechanisms, along with casual conversations, help to make all of those who reside in the LWIA 7 area aware of the Tennessee Career Center at Cookeville and the programs offered.

## **II. Organizational Challenges**

The Tennessee Career Center at Cookeville faces a changing set of challenges. The issue of funding has the greatest impact on our ability to meet our customer needs than any other single issue. Jobseekers can access job listings, access Labor Market Information, and use many other services available through the Tennessee Career Center at Cookeville, but without adequate funding, training resources become limited. Although we are able to leverage resources that allow individuals to enter and complete training during times of higher levels of funding, the opposite is true during periods when funding is reduced.

The Tennessee Career Center at Cookeville in some ways faces competition from other organizations such as temporary employment agencies. By providing employer services such as recruitment advertising, specialized testing, Career Readiness Certificates, and other valuable services to employers at no expense to them, we have a competitive advantage.

Comparative and competitive data is available for most partner programs on the basis of local areas, state to state, and national averages. Since our services are provided as services to the public, they are unique and difficult to compare otherwise. The key to our continuous improvement will be creating processes that will allow us to track performance in comparison to other Workforce Investment Areas, state and national averages, and creating processes to allow improving what we do.

The Career Center system's main challenge is how to make our services more widely known in the community. We will improve our marketing techniques and will place more public service announcements to ensure that employers and job seekers are aware of the services we provide. Another challenge is that partnering agencies operate under different policies and procedures and funding streams and adhere to different performance standards. It is sometimes difficult to ensure seamless customer service when all Career Center programs are not operated or supervised by one organization. Also, massive layoffs or plant closures can cause challenges to the Career Center system by increased unemployment insurance claims, increased numbers of individuals lacking needed skills to obtain employment, and a lack of staff and/or funding to accommodate those individuals who have lost their job.

The Tennessee Career Center at Cookeville has many key business, operational advantages, and human resource advantages. Our main advantage is that we provide many valuable services at no cost to the public. We also have many years of experience in providing employment and training services, and the majority of Career Center staff have worked with these types of programs for many years. In addition, having multiple key employment services to both job seekers and employers in one location makes us a uniquely accessible resource.

The Tennessee Career Center at Cookeville Consortium monitors the effectiveness and customer service of all programs operated through the Career Center. Continued evaluation and sharing of pertinent program information will help all partners in setting goals and serving the customers. The Opinionmeter results will be used to evaluate customer satisfaction. In addition, all partner performance standards with goals and actual performance will be shared with the Consortium members during their quarterly meetings. The performance information will be used to evaluate each partner and to possibly coordinate and share information/resources to improve on performance.