

Report on 5/01/04

Workforce Investment Board Retreat

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(draft 8/02/04)
(revised 9/02/04)

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Summary

The Plan

The plan for the Workforce Investment Board workshop was to leverage a workforce model created by a 1998 Workforce Development Coalition (WDC) group. The concept was to use it as context for considering draft end statements derived from previous Workforce Investment Board work.

The WIB was then to determine their consensus on the most important portions of the model and then to suggest and rank action initiatives to improve system performance.

Specifically the plan was to

- review the meaning of Carver “Ends” statements
- review the “Draft Ends Statements” derived from previous WIB work (See Appendix I),
- review the systems thinking methodology,
- review the model developed by the “WDC System Definition and Leverage Point Identification” group.¹
- have small groups discuss the “Draft Ends Statements” in the context of the feedback loops in the model,
- have participants use proportional voting to rank the importance of the loops, and
- finally have participants develop and rank initiative suggestions.

What Happened

After reviewing the system model, objections to using the systems methodology, to using the WDC System Definition Committee’s model, and to using the previous work of the WIB (described below) led to changing the plan for the remainder of the time.

An objection was that the group had not truly agreed on ends statements. To address this, the time was used for participants to suggest and discuss potential ends statements. These are included below.

An offer

Because we did not take advantage of previous work or use the systems thinking methodology in the workshop, if a group open to the approach is identified, we will offer the workshop at no charge to PPWFC because we consider it so important to leverage the previous substantial work of the “Workforce Development Coalition System Definition and Leverage Point Identification” group.

“Ends” developed by the group

Ends Hierarchy

Prior to discussing “Ends,” Rocky Scott presented a proposed hierarchy of ends (see Figure 1 on next page) and led a discussion of ends.

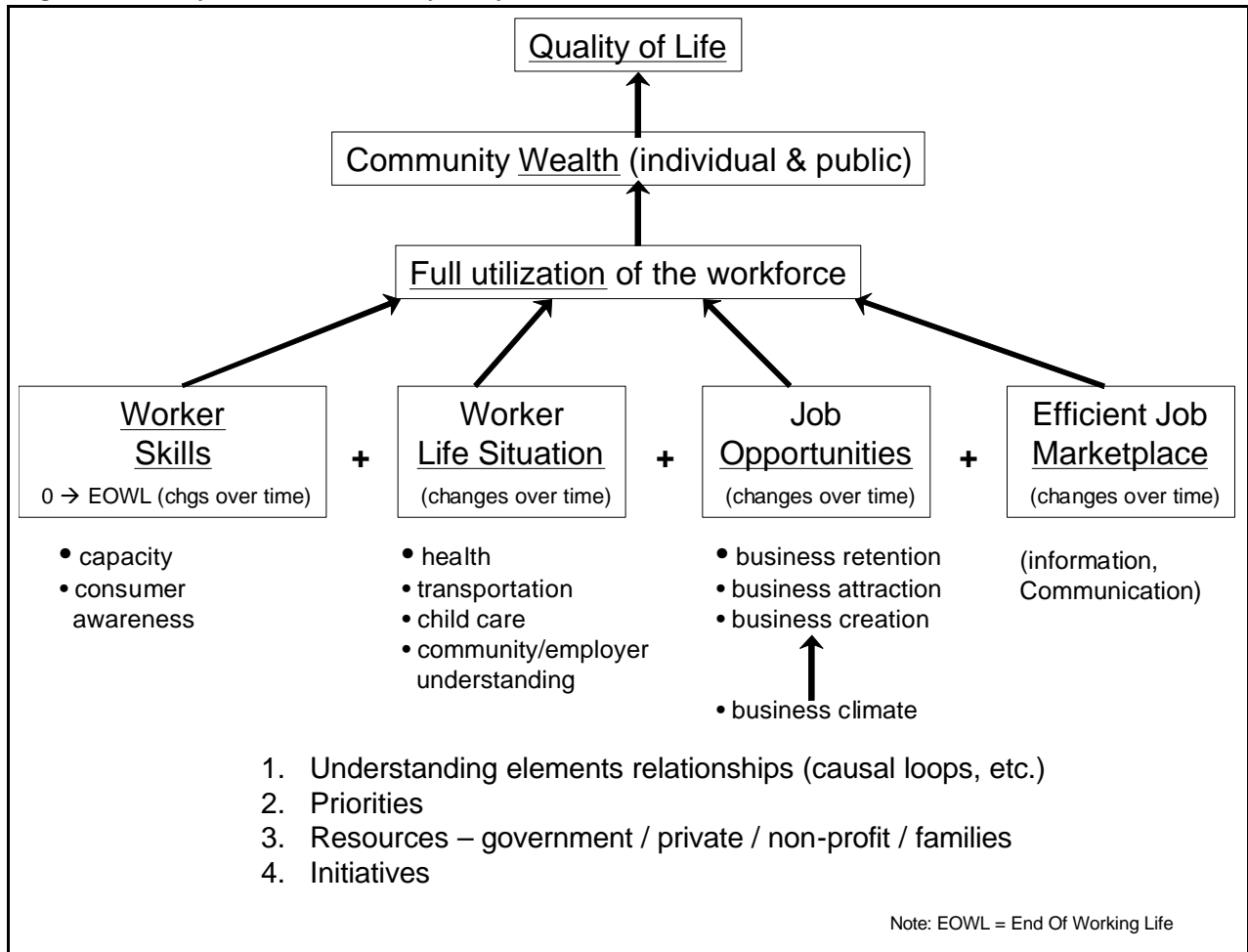
He also led a discussion on the relative influences on people’s lives. The group essentially agreed on the relative strengths of the influences as shown in the table at right.

Environment	20%
Schools	20%
Home	60%

The point of the discussion was that, based on estimates in the table at right, if we wish to make a difference in the outcome of peoples’ lives, we should focus on the areas that most influence their lives and make them “who they are.”

¹ The model shows the feedback loops that regulate WF supply and demand ... it was developed from 7/17/98 through 4/15/99 and the process included a 1/27/99 Model Review Workshop with approximately 24 representatives of business, education and government to get input from people who had not been on the modeling team. See the description of the System Definition Committee’s work at <http://www.exponentialimprovement.com/cms/workforce.shtml>

Figure 1. Hierarchy of “Ends” as drawn by Rocky Scott



“Ends Statement” Suggestions

“Ends” are defined by Carver to be

- What good?
- For whom?
- At what cost/benefit

Carver maintains that ends policies “are policies that address a threefold concept: your organization’s results, recipients, and cost of results. To qualify as an ends statement, a proposition must describe at least one of the three components. Taken as a whole, of course, your Ends policies will describe all three.”

The view was suggested in this meeting that an ends statement must describe all three.

Below are “Ends Statements” suggested and categorized by the group.²

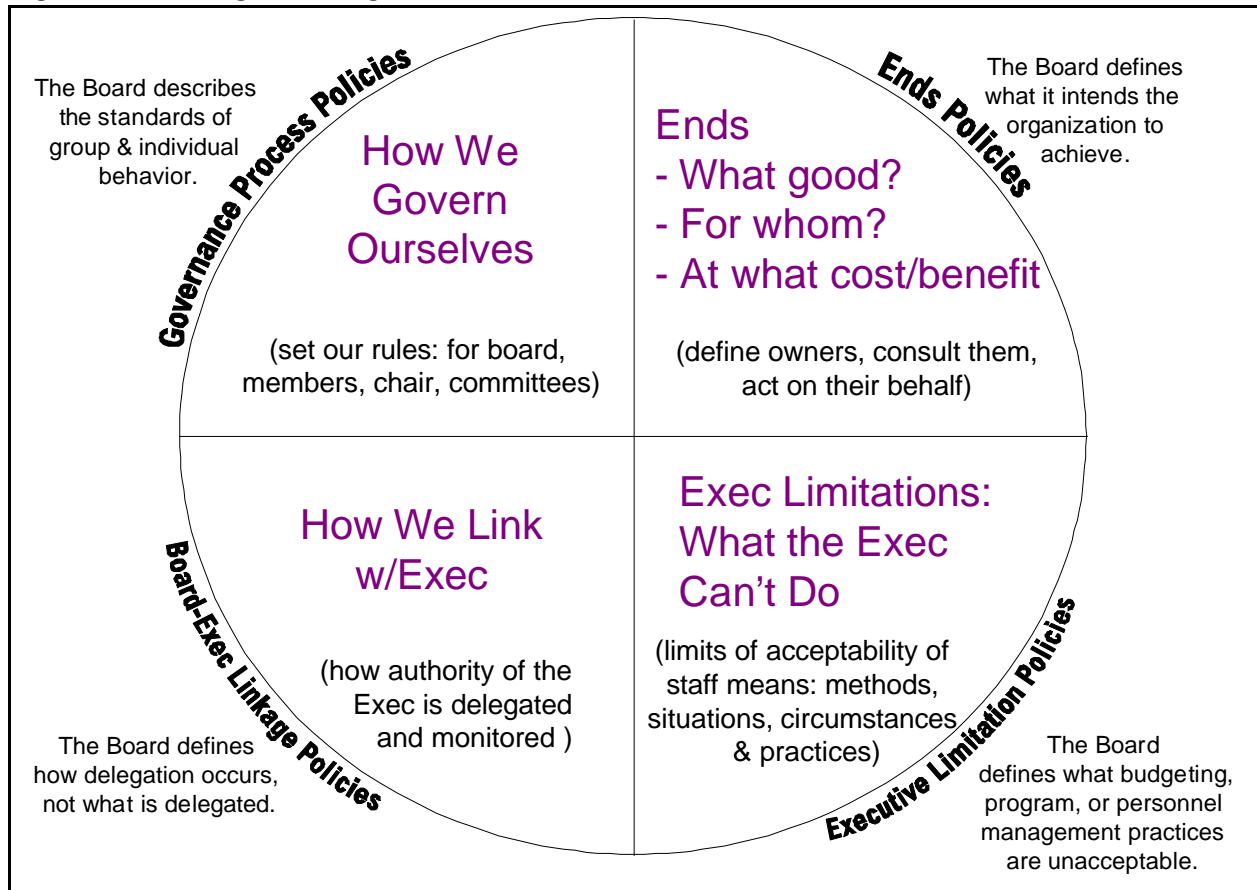
Global Ends

Colorado Springs’ wealth will be maintained / increased through broad awareness of methods and strategies to achieve maximum workforce utilization

PPWFC

² Note that more than half of these are in the form of what might be considered “initiative statements” rather than “ends statements.” This indicates the definition of “ends statements” remains unclear and, if the approach is to be used, additional explanation and practice is needed. Suggestions that are more like “initiative statements” are marked with an asterisk.

Figure 2. Carver's diagram showing what a Board defines



Ends: Worker Skills

Apprenticeship Training *

- Educating
- On Job Skills
- Younger Worker
- Large Cost/Great Benefit

Training Upgrade *

- Better Skills
- Better Monies \$
- Company Cost / Benefit

Increase consumer awareness of skill training options *

- Who:
 - ◆ Unemployed
 - ◆ Under-employed
 - ◆ Entering WF
 - ◆ Employers
 - ◆ Families
- Cost
 - ◆ time, media, PPWFC partners, employers
- Benefits
 - ◆ (same as "who")

Job seekers will be aware of opportunities for developing “in-demand” skills

Mentoring *

- Provide direction
- Future Leaders
- Time of individual
Great Benefits

Every worker will be aware of income/job growth potential made possible by acquiring additional skills

PPWFC

Partners

Unemployed qualified workers will receive training to move back into the community workforce

Develop Partnerships among educators & business to increase understanding RE: inter-relationship & success *

Cost

- time, PPWFC/other expertise

Benefits

- Work together
- Funding
- Better prepped employees

Provide Information to unemployed & underemployed individuals regarding the education and training opportunities available

Create awareness of skill sets needed

- For - job seekers to be skilled
- Cost - PPWFC, Partners

Expand research partnership initiatives *

- Good: job opportunities, worker skills
- For: companies, universities
- Cost: admin work to set up “evangelical” work with industry
possible legislation - incentives

Create an education with industry “program” *

- Good - improve worker skills
- For - workers, companies
- Cost - UCCS, PCC other staff time
- potential tuition for employees, other incentives for companies

Provide High Tech Career Awareness to K-16 students through Industry - Ambassador discussion forums at least 3 times/year. Commit to work with Intel and other Industries to utilize Ambassadors from CS. *

Ends: Life Situation

Create a policy paper on needed infrastructure *

- Good - worker life situation, skills
- legislators, city/county executives, public → benefits of specific infrastructure improvements (roads, schools, etc)
- Cost - volunteer time

Employers who offer “family friendly” work environments will be recognized and rewarded *

Employers address employee life issues through increased understanding gained through association with PPWIB members

Every employer will be aware of the importance of assisting workers to meet life challenges to their organizational interests

PPWFC
Partners

Every worker with life situation challenges will be aware of resources to help them meet challenges

PPWFC
Partners

Community Involvement *

- Good for individuals and community
- Workers / Lower management
- Company cost / Good Benefit

Every child will live in a home with adults that are aware of the home environment that leads to child success

PPWFC
Partners

Create community awareness RE Importance of Pre-K education *

- Who: kids, parents, employers, community at large
- Cost: time, media
- Benefits:
 - ♦ Better parents
 - ♦ Prepared kids (to learn)
 - ♦ Better use of school role
 - ♦ Less remediation

Provide continuous training Local Elected Officials (LEO) about balancing issues of community wealth *

- Benefit: citizens
- Cost: time - some marketing materials, national trainers?

Ends: Job Opportunities

Employers who participate in career ladder partnerships will be recognized & rewarded.

Recruit and retain companies with good workforce development programs *

- identify current best practices/examples
- reward key companies already here (publicity)
- develop plan to bring those companies not here to CS
- provide info on “best practices” to other companies here

Good: job opportunities, worker skills, worker life situation

Cost: Staff time

Ends: Efficient Marketplace

Employers access and fully utilize services of PPWFC

- They know that we help them

Job seekers will find jobs through their association with PPWFC

Employers will have access to qualified workers

Job seekers will become employed at jobs that offer pay, benefits & opportunities for career growth.

Communicate the diverse educational / training opportunities available to education systems *

Every worker will be aware of all job opportunities in the market place that require his skills

PPWFC

Partners

Create partner arrangements with internet job search companies *

- Good - efficient job market, better use of WFC resources
- For - workers, WFC, companies
- Cost - WFC staff time, potential payments to search companies

Improve community access to internet job search *

- Good: efficient job market
- For: workers
- Cost: WFC staff time (assist workers), Advertising, Placement of terminals in non-traditional locations

Develop a workforce pipeline into the future *

- For: community
- Cost: partner with schools, non-profits, Board members, PPWFC, business

Leadership training is key to challenging the culture of business PPWFIB could address leadership training

— “Leadership Academy” or “Workforce Issues Center of Learning” *

Other Comments/Notes (posted during discussion)

Awareness that leads to action

What motivates our target audience?

Incentives

How / where does the PPWFIB add value to employers, workers, community, academia?

A Systems Thinking Workforce Workshop

This portion of this report

- provides a brief overview of the systems thinking approach,
- Examines the relationship between “ends statements,” “initiative statements” and causal loops,
- discusses misconceptions about the systems approach expressed in the workshop,
- explains how the systems approach can be used to examine workforce issues, and
- describes The Attractiveness Principle and presents a "Reality Check" on the workforce challenge.

The Systems Thinking Approach

Living beings, organizations, and societies are systems.

Systems thinking is seeking to understand system behavior by examining “the whole,” instead of by analyzing the parts. To do so we examine the “structure” of the system.

The structure of the system includes the flows (e.g., people placed per unit time), the stocks (e.g., the number of people at the workforce center at any given time), the connections between the stocks and flows, and the information links between them (e.g., observations of the stocks inform and guide adjustment of the flows). Think of filling a glass of water: we observe the level of the water in the glass and adjust the flow as we fill it, shutting off the flow when full. The interdependencies and interactions among the parts create feedback loops, a key aspect of structure. And structure determines of behavior.

A key principle of system dynamics is that system behavior is determined primarily by its internal structure, not by external influences. While external forces do affect system behavior, we first look for how the system itself is designed to exhibit that behavior.

A “Far Side” cartoon by Gary Larson illustrates this. It shows two horn-helmeted Vikings looking forward from the dragon-headed prow of their armored vessel. Behind them are oarsmen on each side of the deck: big, burly men on the left and slight, skinny guys on the right. One Viking says to the other, “I’ve got it, too, Omar ... a strange feeling that we’re just going in circles.” These Vikings may have a well-defined mission and vision, but they must turn around to look at the structure of the system to understand the behavior they’re experiencing.

Another example is that a bell rings because it’s designed to ring, not simply because it’s struck. Most tables don’t “ring like a bell” when we strike them. They go “thunk” and don’t ring because their structure isn’t designed to ring.

The same is true for organizations and societies, we must understand the structure of the system to understand their response to external influences; and then we must modify structure and policies to get the desired results. When things have gone badly in our society, it’s most often because the system was designed (explicitly or implicitly) for things to go badly ... the system was a “bell waiting to be struck” ... and not properly designed to produce the desired behaviors. So it’s not that external influences do not affect system behavior, it’s that *first we look for how the system itself may be creating (or will create) behavior.*

We need the systems thinking perspective and the tools & methods of system dynamics to deal with dynamic complexity, just as we require computers, databases and software to deal with detail complexity. Whereas detail complexity is keeping track of and making sense of lots of data, dynamic complexity is making sense of behavior in systems with multiple feedbacks with long delays.³

In fact, if the relevant feedback is missing, flawed, or not available in a timely manner, organizations and societies fail to learn at all ... or even learn the wrong thing, engaging in what system dynamicists at M.I.T. call “superstitious learning.”⁴

When feedback is delayed or missing, even a routine task such as driving a car becomes difficult due to slowed reaction time, which is why driving while intoxicated is illegal. Organizations and societies must deal with similar delays and missing or defective feedback. By the time we realize something is wrong, decide what to do about it, do it, and then wait to see the results, months or even years can pass.

³ Though feedback and delays are everywhere, we’re generally as unaware of them as we are of the air we breathe.

⁴ See, for example, in Nelson Repenning and John Sterman, “Nobody Ever Gets Credit for Fixing Problems that Never Happened: Creating and Sustaining Process Improvement” (2001) at http://web.mit.edu/nelsonr/www/CMR_Getting_Quality_v1.0.html.

So in our society, when we encounter delayed or even missing feedback, we have the same problem as an intoxicated driver. While drunk driving is illegal, there's no law against organizations and societies engaging in equivalent behavior. But there should be, because the cost is high.

Finally, though some systems diagrams are complex, this is a reflection of the fact that the workforce system itself is very complex.⁵ Systems "problems"⁶ such as this that appear intractable when unsuitable approaches are used to address them.

“Ends statements,” “initiative statements” and causal loops

Carver⁷ describes that:

Ends in Policy Governance refers to the effect an organization seeks to have on the world outside itself. It causes something to be different for someone at some cost. The concept ends embraces:

- The impact, difference, change, benefit, or outcome to be obtained in the lives of consumers or consumer-like populations: *results*.
- The identity, description, or characteristics of the consumers or populations to receive the results: *recipients*.
- The monetary expense, relative worth, or relative priority of a result or set of results, or the comparative priority of certain recipients rather than others getting the results: *cost*.

In preparing for the workshop we categorized the “Draft Ends Statements” derived from previous WIB work as follows:

1. **Assist job seekers** in getting and keeping jobs, including additional skills development
2. **Assist employers** in filling jobs
3. **Educate employers** on workforce issues
4. **Pipeline improvement** including skills development and enhancement, vocational training, retraining, and education (K-16 and beyond) based on current and forecasted knowledge of employer needs.
5. **System improvement:** New and improved ideas about programs to make the workforce system more efficient, effective and adaptable.

Each of these provides a benefit to employers, to job seekers, or to society as a whole.

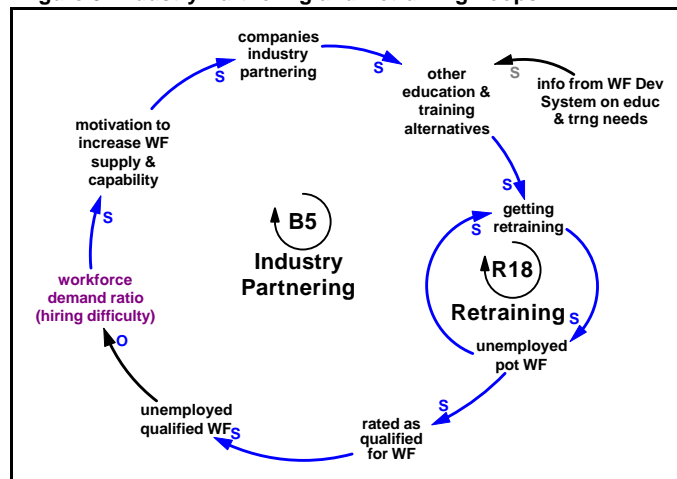
There is a “one to many” relationship between ends and initiatives. That is, many initiatives can be developed to support achieving one end. I would suggest that either ends or initiatives could be offered by workshop participants. When initiatives are suggested, then initiatives could be groups and ends identified for any suggested initiative or groups of initiatives.

Then all ends could be prioritized.

This workshop, in attempting to produce ends statements, actually produced more statements that might be described as initiatives. Examine the suggested ends to evaluate this conclusion.

For example, neither “Apprenticeship Training” nor “Training Upgrade” is an end in itself. These are initiatives that support the ends to “assist job seekers in getting and keeping jobs” and to “assist employers in filling jobs.”

Figure 3. Industry Partnering and Retraining Loops



⁵ See the CIA web site for a paper on reading the systems diagrams: <http://www.exponentialimprovement.com/cms/PracticalST.shtml>.

⁶ The term “problem” is used loosely here. The “workforce problem” is actually a “wicked mess”, where a “mess” is a set of problems so interrelated that taking action to address one problem provokes another problem in the system, and where a “wicked mess” is a mess in which there are great inequalities of economic and political power.

⁷ Carver & Carver, *Reinventing Your Board*, 1997.

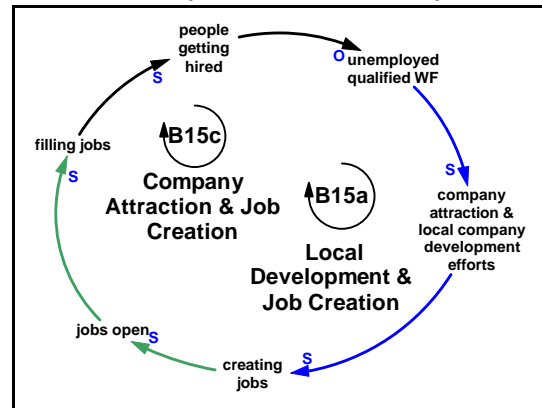
Causal loops can represent either ends statements or initiative statements.

For example, Figure 3 is structure extracted from the set of “Industry and ED Loops” that shows “Retraining” and “Industry Partnering” loops.⁸ As just noted, these are not “ends;” they represent initiative statements.

Or, Figure 4 shows another extract from the set of “Industry and ED Loops.” Both “Company Attraction & Job Creation” and “Local Development & Job Creation” represent ends statements. In this case the “Job Creation” end provides benefits to those seeking jobs and to the community as a whole.

The loops in Figure 3 are “initiative loops” that support the “ends loops” in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Company Attraction & Local Development Job Creation Loops



Misconceptions about the Systems Approach and Miscalculations in Preparing for the Workshop.

Miscalculation regarding previous WIB work: In preparing for the workshop, I assumed that there would be enough acceptance of the previous WIB work in the March 2004 meeting and from the “Serving the Community Workforce” report to provide a basis for proceeding with the workshop in examining the system structure to elicit and prioritize initiatives. This was an invalid assumption.

Miscalculation regarding initiatives and ends: The premise of the workshop was to identify and prioritize initiatives needed to improve the performance of the workforce system at this time. If desired, initiatives could be clustered according to the ends they serve. This was an invalid assumption, because the group apparently felt it needed to focus on developing consensus on ends statements.

Miscalculation about the acceptance of WDC group’s work: In preparing for the workshop, I assumed that there would be enough tentative acceptance of, and respect for, the substantial work over a 9 month period performed by a 1998 Workforce Development Coalition (WDC) group in creating a workforce model to allow it to be used for examining WIB ends and initiatives. This was an invalid assumption as the model was almost immediately assumed to be lacking validity and not even provisionally accepted.

There was unexpected opposition to the premise that the WDC group adopted: that the purpose of the workforce system was to regulate the “workforce demand ratio (hiring difficulty).” That is, sometimes there are more people needed to fill jobs and, at other times, there are more jobs needed for people. The WDC group identified regulating loops for each of these cases. Which loops would be emphasized at any time would depend on where the community is in the economic cycle.

Misconceptions about using the systems approach:

- The opinion was expressed that the Workforce Development Coalition model wasn’t validated and therefore could not be considered.

This belief results from a lack of understanding that all models are wrong, but some are useful. In particular, the model developed by the 1998 Workforce Development Coalition (WDC) is useful for improving thinking about this very complex system. It’s important to leverage previous work because it requires too much effort to start from scratch with each new group.

Another issue is that in many cases a fully-validated, quantitative model is just too difficult to develop. Even if one were to be developed, by the time it’s done, a system can change enough that the model is no longer correct.

- The objection was made that the model did not, for example, contain “road building” as a means to improving the ability of people to join the potential workforce.

⁸ All loops are shown in Appendix II of this report.

The WDC model does not include this because the time delays for road building are very long, because there was more emphasis on giving people alternatives that don't require a car so they can reach low-wage jobs, and because road building to reduce traffic congestion does not work.⁹

- The statement was made that a systems approach based on examining feedback implies “command and control.”

This is far from the case. Systems such as this are far too complex to be controlled. The idea is to identify initiatives and policies that can influence system behavior to be more favorable, that is, to nudge the system in a favorable direction. The approach is also useful in understanding delays, for example, in understanding how much lead time is necessary for an initiative or policy change to have an effect.

How the systems approach can be used to examine workforce issues

The usefulness of a causal loop model is that examining the operation of the loops can help suggest initiatives that can promote loop operation in supporting either other initiatives or the ends the initiatives serve.

It's important to develop initiatives that promote action in every part of loop, because a feedback loop is only engaged if actions are taken and/or information supplied around the entire loop.

Like a bicycle chain, one link cannot move unless all links move. It's often not effective to just pick, say, the top 5 things to do as in many strategic approaches. Doing so may neglect critical links in critical feedback loops.

The workforce systems model can raise the level of thinking about what can be done to improve system operation.

Another model that can be useful is the high level feedback in a business context that is represented by the “Balanced Scorecard”¹⁰ shown in Figure 5. Initiatives can be identified to provide:

- increased value to employers, employees, community
- processes enhanced
- skills & capabilities enhanced

To aid in prioritization, policies and initiatives can be classified using an Action Priority Matrix, such as that shown in Figure 6, to specify difficulty and impact. In many cases it's preferable to give priority to policies and initiatives that have high impact and are easy to implement.

Figure 5. Creating Strategic Focus using Balanced Scorecard feedback

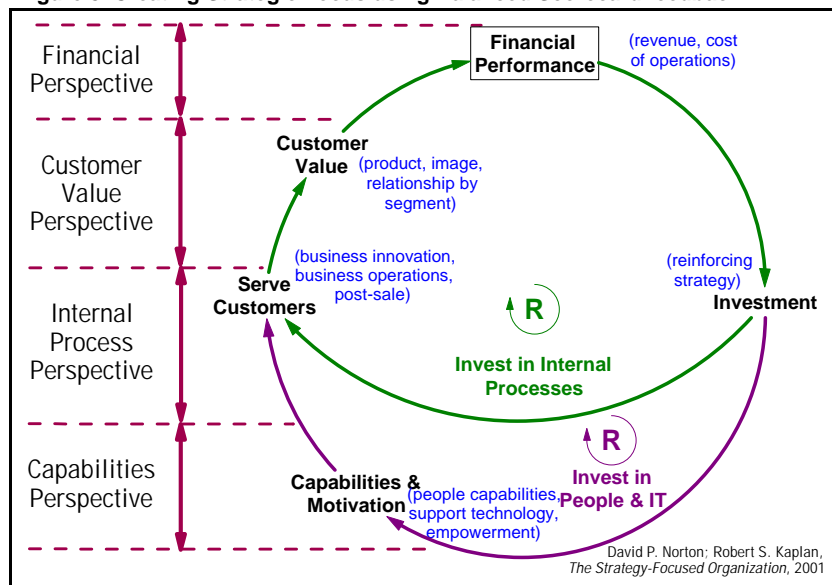


Figure 6. Action Priority Matrix

		Difficulty	
		Easy	Hard
Impact	High		
	Low		

⁹ Road building leads to more growth and more traffic congestion. This is explained in the paper on the “Growth Facts of Life,” 1/19/04. Go to: <http://www.exponentialimprovement.com/cms/growthfacts.shtml>.

¹⁰ For an explanation, see the paper on “Create Strategic Focus” at: <http://www.exponentialimprovement.com/cms/strategicfocus.shtml>.

Finally, a Strategy Matrix, such as that shown in Figure 7, can be used to identify who should participate in improving the operation of Key Success Loops or coping with external Driving Forces.¹¹

An Attractiveness Principle "Reality Check"

The Attractiveness Principle¹² states that people are attracted, for example to a product, a business or a region, based on its composite attractiveness. "Attractive" in this context does not mean "pretty;" it means the composite of factors that attract.

Applied to a business, it means that no business can be all things to all people. No restaurant can have the lowest prices, best products and best service; it must decide and focus on its "value proposition."

Similarly, no region can be all things to all people. It cannot have the lowest taxes, lowest housing prices, best quality of life and best jobs. Just as for restaurants, as long as people are free to migrate, no place can long remain more attractive (overall) than any other place.

People flow from places that are less attractive to places that are more attractive until the places to which they are moving become just as unattractive as the place from which they are moving. Can't you just see it? It's like water seeking its own level.

This means that, over the long run, Colorado Springs will be no more attractive than the least attractive location in the country. For example, no more attractive than Los Angeles.

There is no utopia in either restaurants or social systems. Repeat. There is no utopia in social systems. No place can be all things to all people. It's a "Gilda Radnor world" ... "there's always something!"

So what does this mean for the workforce system?

It means that if the WIB does a great job and, for example, creates a system that provides the right people with the right skills in a timely manner for businesses in Colorado Springs, then more businesses will be attracted to Colorado Springs and the workforce system will again be stretched in helping companies find the right people.

On the other hand, if WIB does a great job in creating a system that provides the best jobs for people, more people will be attracted to Colorado Springs and the workforce system will again be stretched, only in this case in finding jobs for people.

There will either be difficulty in supplying jobs for people or supplying people for businesses. This is why the workforce system must to be able to regulate the "workforce demand ratio (hiring difficulty)" when it is either greater than one or less than one.¹³

Figure 7. Strategy Matrix: Functions vs. Key Success Loops & Driving Forces

Organization or Individual	Key Success Loops & Driving Forces						Summary of Strategy for each Function
	Loop B2 Customer Service Quality	Loop B4 Short Pay Effect on Revenue	Loop B5 Short Pay Effect on Customer Satisfaction	Loop B6 Short Pay Effect on Customer Service Efficiency	Driving Force F1	Driving Force F2	
Sales							
Finance							
Customer Service							
Product Quality							
Other							
Summary of Strategy for Each Loop or Driving Force							

... adapted from Clayton Christensen, "Making Strategy: Learning by Doing," *Harvard Business Review*, Nov/Dec 1997

¹¹ See the paper, "Causal Loops to Action," for an explanation at <http://www.exponentialimprovement.com/cms/loopstoaction.shtml>. Many organizations have created complex causal loop diagrams, but they haven't known how to make practical use of them as a basis for action. This paper explains how.

¹² See the paper on "Making Strategic Choices" at <http://www.exponentialimprovement.com/cms/attractiveness.shtml> that explains the need to make strategic choices and describes the structure of "The Attractiveness Principle."

¹³ It may seem like either more people or more businesses is desirable. However, it's not that simple. Read the "Growth Facts of Life" at: <http://www.exponentialimprovement.com/cms/growthfacts.shtml>.

Appendix I. Categorized “Draft Ends Statements”

Statements from WIB member suggestions in the March 2004 meeting and from the “Serving the Community Workforce” (SCWF) prepared for use in the 5/1/04 WIB workshop.

The WIB directs the development and improvement of the Workforce System to:

1. Assist job seekers in getting and keeping jobs, including additional skills development

- Facilitate employment decisions by matching skills to needs.
- All job seekers will find available job opportunities.
- Open as many doors as possible within the community to give a potential employee a larger job search.
- (Assist) Employed, unemployed, or underemployed low-income people in our community.

2. Assist employers in filling jobs

- Facilitate employment decisions by matching skills to needs.
- Meet the workforce needs of employers
- Filling all the job orders that our customers give us with qualified candidates
- (Provide) Qualified applicants as a percentage of skilled jobs available vs. (instead of) jobs filled.

3. Educate employers on workforce issues

- Meet the workforce needs of employers
- Assist employers with resources for trying to keep up with new and changing technologies.

4. Pipeline improvement including skills development and enhancement, vocational training, retraining, and education (K-16 and beyond) based on current and forecasted knowledge of employer needs.

- Prepared workers
- Influence on human factors affecting the employability of residents of El Paso and Teller Counties. factors are education, training, higher education, etc.
- Increase number of programs that retrain displaced workers
- Prepare skilled workers by knowing workforce needs for now and in the future, and impacting education to prepare people to have needed skills.
- (Provide) Qualified applicants as a percentage of skilled jobs available vs. jobs filled.

S. System improvement: New and improved ideas about programs to make the workforce system more efficient, effective and adaptable.

- Enhanced ideas about programs or new ways to enable the user of the services to better achieve their goals in the marketplace.
- To shape a workforce system which provides all stakeholders coverage benefits of maximum employment for El Paso and Teller counties.
- Provide community with innovate and effective breakthrough solutions to their workforce issues.
- Increase and sustain community awareness (marketing) [SCWF]
- Facilitate and leverage existing, as well as new, workforce partnerships. [SCWF]
- Improve flow of workforce data (... to/from?) [SCWF]
- Increase WIB and WFC involvement in strategic planning and problem solving [SCWF]
- Evaluate the case for a regional workforce coordinator [SCWF]

Appendix II. WDC Model of primary loops that regulate WF Supply & Demand

This workforce model was created by a 1998 Workforce Development Coalition (WDC) System Definition Committee. It's modified here to simplify somewhat and divide it into related portions.

Figure 8. Industry & ED Loops

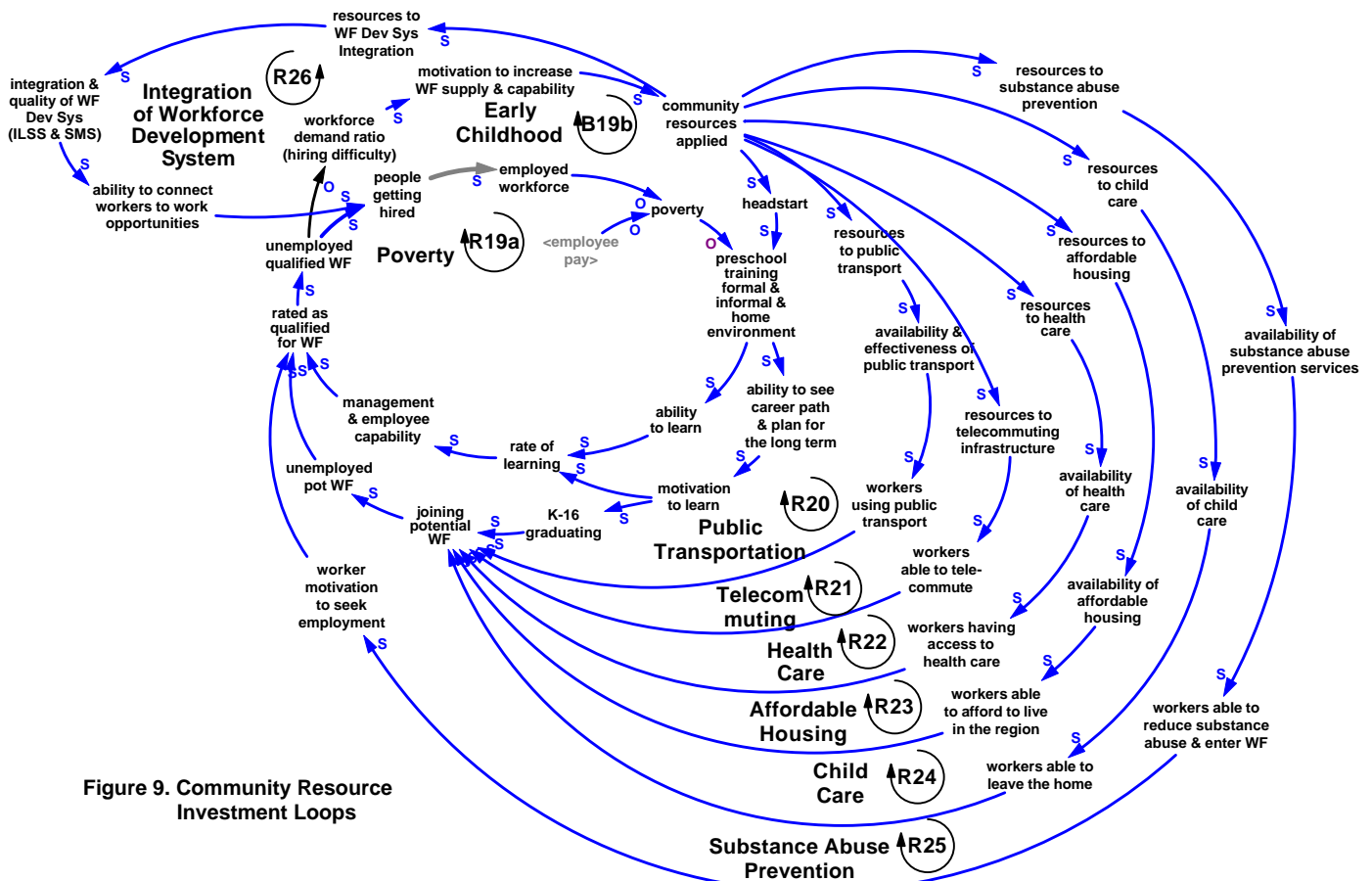
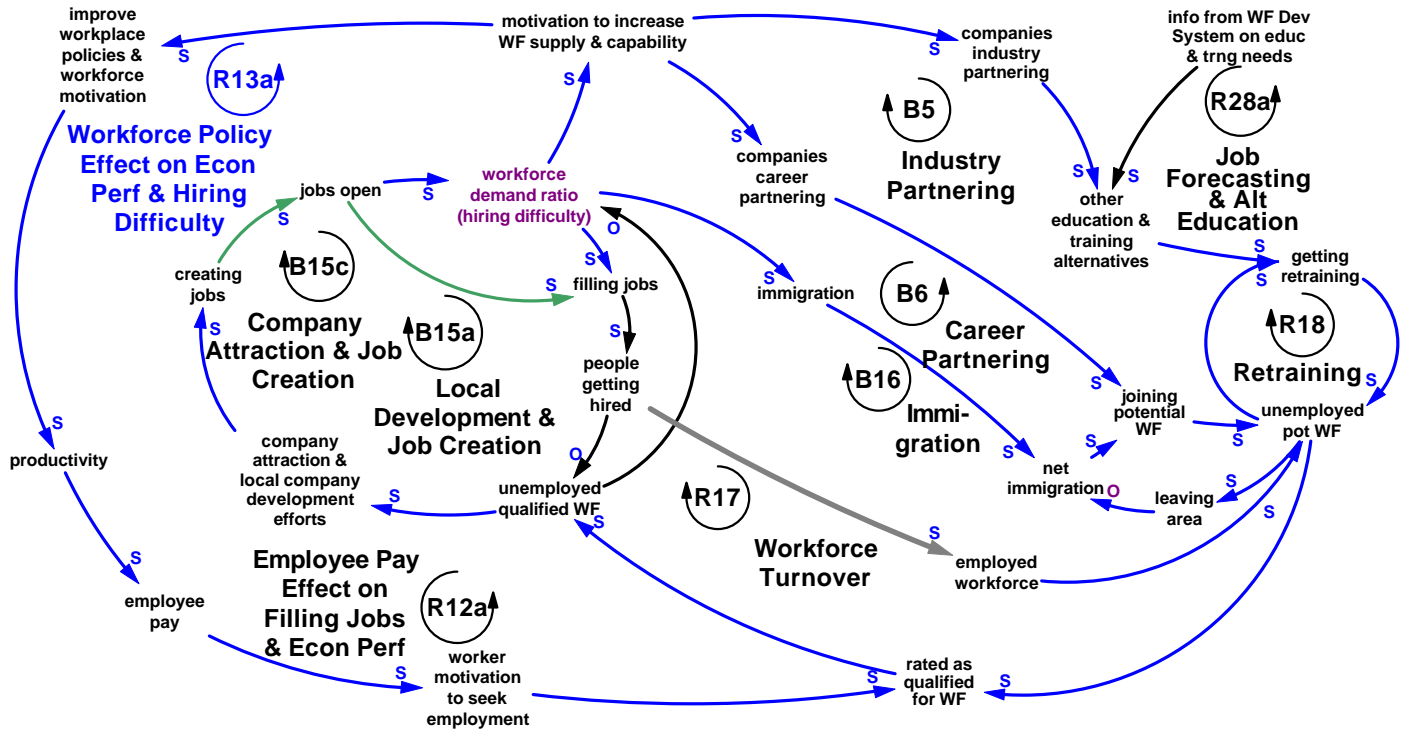


Figure 9. Community Resource Investment Loops

Figure 10. Education Loops

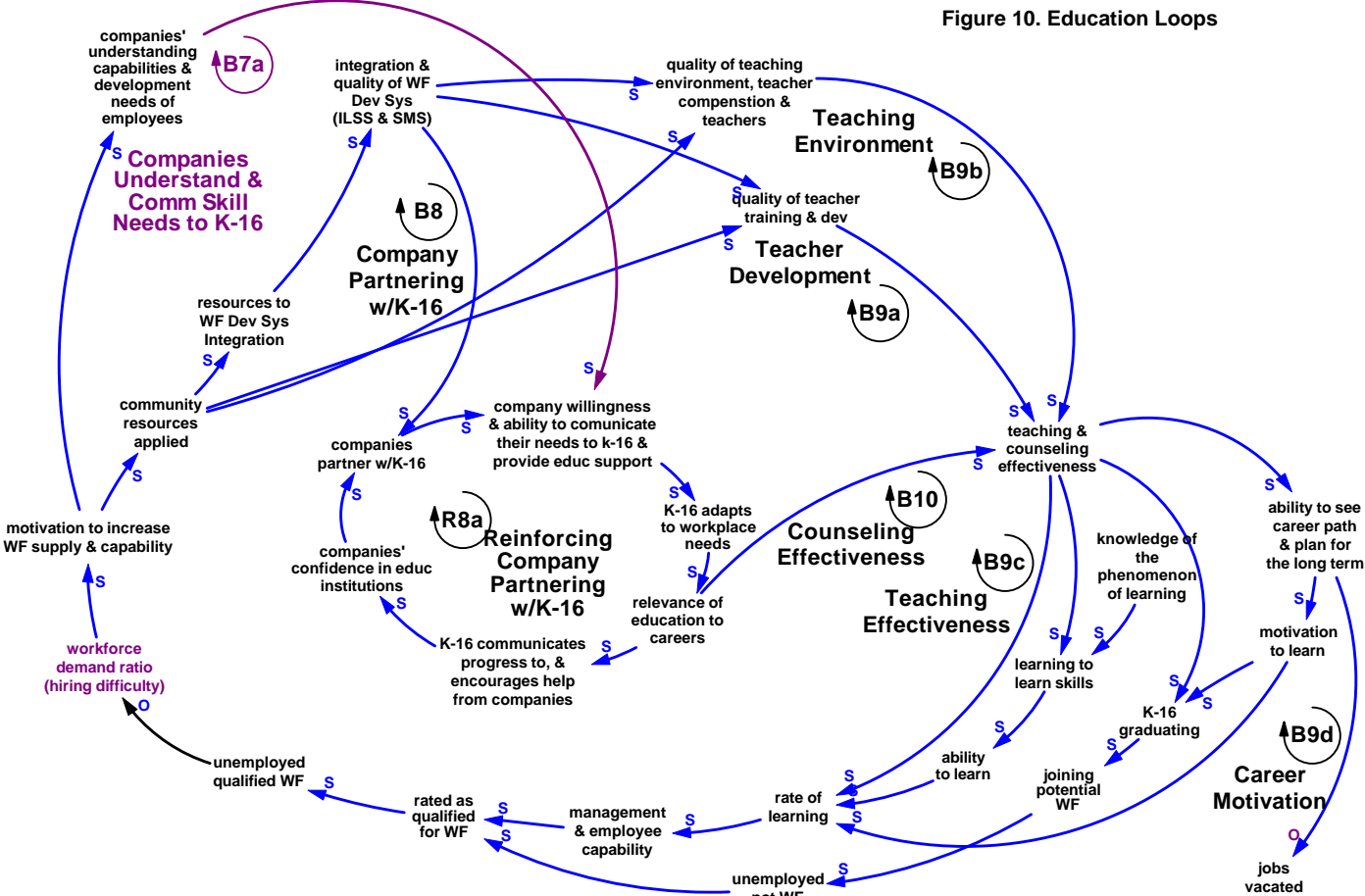


Figure 11. Hiring, Matching, Training, Misc. Loops

