Abstract

MATTHEWS MARTIN, MARTHA ANNE. Workforce Development in Transition: Perceptions of Leadership Among Progressive State Workforce Investment Board Chairs. (Under the direction of Dr. Diane Chapman.)

In today’s global economy, few would deny that the pace of change is increasing at unprecedented rates. Leaders are faced with complex issues and emerging challenges on a daily basis. In the workforce development context, state-level workforce investment board chairs must deal with both difficult economic realities, such as globalization and widening workforce skill gaps, and significant shifts in federal expectations under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014.

The purpose of this study was to understand how leaders of progressive state-level workforce investment boards perceive this leadership challenge. How do they maneuver their way through the process? How do they learn to be successful in the complex workforce development context? How do they maintain their commitment to strategic objectives, despite the challenges of the democratic process?

Research questions were answered using a qualitative case study design that included semistructured interviews, an online survey, and artifact reviews from among the nation’s most progressive state-level Workforce Investment Boards. The findings suggest that successful state-level WIB chairs perform as integrative leaders, using collaboration as both a leadership tool and the foundation to an enduring regime.

It is recommended that WFD leaders engage with the political system and seek avenues to continue professional development throughout their tenue. Further research could be undertaken to better understand the leadership experiences of newly appointed WIB chairs, or those from states with differing interpretations of federal regulations.
Workforce Development in Transition: Perceptions of Leadership Among Progressive State Workforce Investment Board Chairs

by

Martha Anne Matthews Martin

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APPROVED BY:

_______________________________  _________________
Dr. Brad Mehlenbacher    Dr. Audrey Jaeger

_______________________________  _________________
Dr. Michelle Bartlett      Dr. Diane Chapman
Chair of Advisory Committee
Dedication

This work is dedicated to my parents, Albert and Eleanor Daigle, who showed me through their own accomplishments that education provides adventure for a lifetime and is the fountain from which creativity, joy, and personal freedom abound. You were my first instructors in the arduous classroom of life, and I hope that I was an attentive, if not always willing, student. I will be forever grateful for the lessons you taught me and the opportunities you so generously provided.

To my children, Ryan, Brenna, and Caroline, who sacrificed much for me to achieve this goal. You have proven yourselves to be mature well beyond your years.

To my sisters, Ginny and Mary, who, along with countless other friends and colleagues, were there for me when the going was tough, when the days were long and the nights even longer. I thank you for your understanding, or tolerance, whichever the case might be.

And finally, to my husband, Bryan, who believed in me even when I did not believe in myself. Your love is the light that guided me through the darkness, and your unwavering support was a helping hand when I stumbled along the way. Thank you for convincing me that this path would be neither too long nor too steep for me to conquer.
Biography

Martha Matthews Martin was born and raised in Massachusetts, the descendant of Irish and French Canadian immigrants who came to America at the turn of the last century seeking jobs in Lowell’s prosperous textile mills. She graduated from Emmanuel College with a degree in biology, beginning her career in medical research. After completing a master’s degree in public health from Boston University, her career shifted from research to environmental and regulatory compliance, which eventually led to a move to North Carolina.

While working in environmental, health, and safety services for a leading biomanufacturing company in Research Triangle Park, serendipity intervened, and she inherited the responsibility for technical training on a “short-term” basis. Some 17 years later, this temporary assignment had evolved into a passionate career developing meaningful programs that challenge and engage learners to grow both professionally and personally.

In 2006, Ms. Matthews Martin was appointed a member of North Carolina’s NCWorks Commission as a representative of the biotechnology and pharmaceutical industry sector. During her tenure with the commission, she has had the opportunity to travel throughout the state, meeting with a great many dedicated members of the workforce community and listening to the stories of people who struggle in the new global economy. Having weathered workplace instability, job loss, and economic reemergence during the Great Recession, the improvement of a robust workforce development system has become a very personal public-service mission.

She currently lives in Raleigh with her husband, Bryan, while working full time in the pharmaceutical industry to pay college tuition for their children, in preparation for whatever life brings them in the future.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

In August 1998, President William Clinton signed the federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA). Heralded as the end of “business as usual” (Decker & Berk, 2011, p. 906) for workforce development (WFD), the law intended to transform the flawed legacy program promulgated by the Job Partner Training Act (JPTA) by providing universal access to services, mandating collaboration among the various public and private partners of workforce support and training intervention, and streamlining customer service activities under a single structure in the form of the one-stop center.

WIA supported workforce training and development with a primary, but not exclusive, focus on the unemployed. The act authorized funding and established a system of state and local WFD governing structures, known as workforce investment boards (WIBs), to oversee the implementation of key aspects of the legislation (Decker & Berk, 2011; Hopkins, Monaghan, & Hansman, 2009). In a departure from previous regulations, the act was designed to be less proscriptive, allowing WIBs the flexibility to cater to the needs of the local economic and political environment. Furthermore, the law sought to “more fully engage businesses, and fundamentally changed the service provided to youth” (Decker & Berk, 2011, p. 906).

Designed to serve clients through the three-tiered system illustrated by Figure 1, WIA ensured universal access to less resource-intensive core services, with the intention of narrowing the population given intensive services or training and education (Decker & Berk, 2011). This process of sequential eligibility (Shaw, Goldrick-Rab, Mazzeo, & Jacobs, 2006, p. 104) sought to provide the minimum amount of support necessary to secure employment. Additionally, the law placed no time limits for participation in any tier of service.
Figure 1. The three tiers of Workforce Investment Act services (Decker & Berk, 2011).

America’s Most Vulnerable

Flexible language allowed WIBs to set policies that either facilitated entry into training programs or restricted and delayed access for participants (Barnow & King, 2003; Barnow & Smith, 2004; Decker & Berk, 2011; Shaw et al., 2006; Timmons, Fesko, & Cohen, 2004). Some public administration scholars suggested that policy implementation was a purely administrative activity (Matland, 1995); however, this narrow perspective either ignored the politics of field experience or devised methods to eliminate political aspects. Berman (as cited in Matland, 1995) argued that if local-level implementers were not given the freedom to adapt a program to the needs of the local community, the program would be more likely to fail. In the WIA context, local variation meant that “individuals seeking assistance in one local area may encounter a program with a strong work-first ideology, while individuals in another local area may find case managers committed to more intensive vocational training” (Decker & Berk, 2011, p. 906).
Although “there is mounting evidence from the field . . . that the outcomes for individuals who pursue education or training activities are far better off than for those who simply find a job” (Van Opstal, 2001, p. 54), critics of WIA suggested flawed reporting metrics as a source for disreputable implementation practice, which blocked intensive and training services for citizens with the greatest barriers to employment, America’s second-chance citizens—individuals left behind by the first-chance public education system (Decker & Berk, 2011; Giloth, 2004).

Shaw and colleagues (2006) argued that the narrowed access to training programs provided through WIA had a disproportionate impact on the poor. “In short, our data suggest a movement away from serving the most disadvantaged adults. WIA is a much narrower path to training for welfare recipients, African Americans, and other low-income and undereducated populations than was its predecessor” (p. 110). The disparate treatment of marginalized community members created a lack of hope, cynicism, and skepticism about the payoffs of work and training (Stone & Worqs, as cited in Giloth, 2004; C. Stone, 2005) among America’s most vulnerable citizens.

**Progressive Workforce Development (WFD)**

Despite the challenges the WFD system faced under WIA, scholarly literature has suggested that progressive strategies generated meaningful improvement for America’s vulnerable citizens (Clarke, 2004; Fitzgerald, 2004; Fung & Zdrazil, 2004; Giloth, 2004; S. R. Smith & Davis, 2004). In a pivotal study of six U.S. cities granted funds by the Annie E. Casey Jobs Initiative, researchers followed the progress of workforce innovations for a period of 5 years (Giloth, 2004). Although the factors that led to success or failure were complex, the role of civic leadership in creating a collaborative cross-sector working
environment was clearly associated with successful workforce strategies (Clarke, 2004; Fung & Zdrazil, as cited in Giloth, 2004; S. R. Smith & Davis, 2004). The Jobs Initiative study posed a simple yet profound question: Could the right leader, employing the right leadership strategy, help make WFD more effective for low-skilled, low-wage workers and job seekers?

Marybeth Shinn (2007) provided valuable insights into scholarly discourse concerning evidence-based policy development. Shinn suggested that (a) individual leaders did make a difference in the political process, (b) timing was crucial to successful reforms, (c) governments were willing to act on the basis of scientifically sound ideas, (d) the long-term costs of change must be considered, and (e) different agencies within the government have varying appetites for information, based upon their own worldviews. Nonetheless, when academics took the time to frame scholarly research within the realm of public leadership, positive, sustained improvement in WFD, spearheaded by individual leaders’ impact, was evident (Hebert, 2010).

At times, the change attributed to public leaders had a positive effect, at other times less so, and at times leaders found that they had to accept setbacks to advances that had already been made. Hebert (2010) shared that successful WFD leaders took a long-term view of success. While acknowledging the complexity of the workforce system, this study contributes to the leadership literature by exploring how leadership behavior supports or inhibits the generation of sustainable WFD strategies for America’s most vulnerable citizens. In other words, this study focuses on the critical role individual leaders play in determining the outcome of vital public programs. The lessons learned that follow, generated from local WFD successes and failures, illustrate this point.
The Importance of Leadership

Situated between Lake Erie and the Cuyahoga River lies the city of Cleveland, Ohio. Like many U.S. cities, Cleveland boomed in the post–World War II (WWII) era. Its citizens prospered until the global shift from industrial economies to knowledge work reversed the city’s balance sheet. Political missteps in the 1970s continued to aggravate Cleveland’s urban decline, signaling the need for change (Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Flanagan, 2004; Nelson, 1997).

“One man can make a difference” was Dennis Kucinich’s 1977 mayoral campaign slogan when he was elected the “boy mayor” of Cleveland (Chrislip & Larson, 1994, p. 16). The brash 31-year-old mayor and his arrogant, antagonistic staff quickly alienated the local business community. His decisions resulted in the dubious honor of leading the first U.S. city into default since the Great Depression (Nelson, 1997). The mayor’s confrontational tone with business leaders and heavy-handed authoritarianism in neighborhoods left the city divided and unable to cope with a plethora of public issues, including inner-city blight and unemployment. Sadly, “Dennis the Menace” Kucinich demonstrated that one man could indeed make a difference, albeit to the detriment of the community at large (Flanagan, 2004; Nelson, 1997).

Fortunately, the literature is replete with stories of leaders who inspired collaboration, endorsed meaningful dialog, and tackled complicated public policy issues demanding engagement, tolerance for ambiguity, and innovation (Shinn, 2007). When Norman Rice became mayor of Seattle (Winn, 1990), he took bold steps to integrate economic development with WFD strategies by creating the Office of Economic Development (OED; Fitzgerald, 2004; Giloth, 2004; S. R. Smith & Davis, 2004). The new office ended the
departmental separation of workforce and economic development, and the mayor held the newly formed OED to new performance metrics based on job placement and retention.

Mayor Rice aggressively marketed the port city as a global partner for trade with both Asia and Europe (Page, 2010; Schaefer, 1994), while simultaneously supporting participation in the Annie E. Casey Jobs Initiative in 1995 (Fitzgerald, 2004; Giloth, 2004). The mayor, city council, and other stakeholders collaborated to redefine how workforce systems operated by targeting higher wage positions, organizing employer brokers, engaging the community college system, and establishing wraparound services for vulnerable populations (Giloth, 2004). Mayor Rice was a pioneer in collaborative governance, bringing together citizens, nongovernmental agencies, and public administrators to address and solve complex public problems that cannot be solved in isolation (Page, 2010).

Leaders Improve Civic Capacity

Scholars have reported similar stories of successful collaborations with strong, committed leaders in other urban settings, including Milwaukee (Fung & Zdrazil, 2004), Denver (Clarke, 2004), New York City (Shinn, 2007), and Chicago (Fitzgerald, 2004). Each vignette of social policy innovation illustrates how civic capacity is nurtured and mobilized to enact systematic change agendas. According to Giloth (2004), “reform efforts have to move against the grain, and ultimately involve the acquisition of power, influence, and leadership” (p. 22).

The success of some organizations, and the failure of others, to coalesce into a sustainable progressive regime gained interest among researchers in the leadership field. While Hebert (2010) reported a large body of literature that speaks to leadership theory in the private sector, he also noted minimal research effort in the public sector, and even less is
published about leadership in the philanthropic community. Additionally, little scholarly attention has been given to leadership traits, talents, and tactics that facilitate system-level change agency (Hebert, 2010).

This gap in the scholarly literature is significant for the WFD context, which is situated among public administration, private business, and not-for-profit interests (Van Wart, 2013a). Nonetheless, Shinn (2007) suggested that “political appointees [such as WIB chairs], are often more interested in solving problems than in following a liberal or conservative line, and that fact opens up opportunities” (p. 216) for encouraging meaningful change through research and theory-building efforts. WIB chairs are political appointees given the legitimate statutory authority to bring together divergent public, private, and nonprofit stakeholder groups into a common vision (Bartelt, 2004; Wallner, 2008). How well leaders perform their duties impacts the value this vast, complex, and loosely coupled WFD system brings to the citizens of their state.

**WFD Leadership at the State Level**

The relative failure of America’s WFD system to meet the needs of our most vulnerable citizens is often attributed to a lack of public commitment, improper design, and poor execution (Decker & Berk, 2011). Most criticism leveraged against WFD is focused on Congress and the duplicative programs promulgated by the federal government (Giloth, 2004). Research on WFD funded by nonprofit funding agencies such as the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, and the Ford Foundation (Fitzgerald, 2004; Giloth, 2004) focused attention at the local level, where the ambiguity in WIA as crafted by federal legislation encourages program implementation at the local level that adversely affects citizens with multiple barriers to employment (Shaw et al., 2006).
Notwithstanding the critical role that local governments play as the social and political foci of activity, the legal concept of preemption sets limits on the authority of city government (Bartelt, 2004; Ferman, 2010). American cities derive their power from the state and, even in the case of “home rule,” act as an “instrument of the state” (Frug, 1999, p. 17). In practical terms, municipalities have only the authority that the state determines is necessary. When federal policy shifted from JTPA to WIA in 1998, the way WFD programs were funded moved from the office of the governor to state-level WIBs (Shaw et al., 2006). How state-level WFD leaders interpret ambiguous legislative language impacts strategic program priorities and funding allocations, which in turn impact the way services are delivered to citizen-clients (Shaw et al., 2006).

State WIB chairs assume the legitimate statutory and political position for both federal and state governance in setting the agenda for WFD activities (Bartelt, 2004; Wallner, 2008). As such, state-level WIB chairs are in a position to influence the future of the WFD system in their states, and as numerous case studies illustrate, one person can make a difference—to work together and enhance the public good (Clarke, 2004; Fitzgerald, 2004; Fung & Zdrazil, 2004; Shinn, 2007) or cause division and impede progress (Flanagan, 2004; Nelson, 1997). The better state-level WIB chairs share power, adhere to democratic principles, reframe the agenda, and build collaborative space in which stakeholder voices are heard, the more successful they will be executing the WFD mission (Hebert, 2010).

Just as the country shifted away from training as a best practice from JTPA to WIA, the nation is shifting again. In times of change, the importance of strong leadership is great, and understanding how to deal with complex issues is of paramount importance.
A System in Transition

On July 22, 2014, President Barack Obama signed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the reauthorization of WIA (Dervarics, 2014). Congress passed the act with widespread bipartisan and bicameral support, a rare event in the contemporary polarized political climate. WIOA was designed to streamline existing WFD and was purposefully demand-side driven, with a key focus on the needs of employers seeking to match candidates with job vacancies. The bill became effective on July 1, 2015, which allowed states and local government agencies time to prepare to meet new requirements specified in the legislation.

Statement of the Problem

Two related problems guided this study. As demonstrated, success in providing vital WFD service to America’s most vulnerable citizens varies tremendously among and within states (Shaw et al., 2006). While state WIBs were granted the legitimate statutory and political power to develop the framework for local workforce investment activities (Bartelt, 2004; Wallner, 2008), little was known about state-level board chairs and how they perceived their role in serving the public good (Hebert, 2010). Furthermore, scholars questioned the ability of current leadership theories to adequately address the public sector (Van Wart, 2013a), including complex WFD contexts.

The second problem, also presented earlier, is that the U.S. WFD system is in transition. With WIOA superseding WIA, state WIB chairs are challenged with understanding the new law and the impact it has on the loosely coupled WFD system. Using integrative leadership and collaborative governance approaches through regime theory, this
study sought to contribute to our understanding of leadership in the WFD context through the perceptions of progressive leaders.

**Purpose of the Study**

For a variety of reasons, including globalization, the shift from manual labor to knowledge work, our collective dependency on technology in the workplace, and the reemergence of high-tech manufacturing, the skill and educational attainment required to secure and maintain a competitive edge in the workforce has never been greater for U.S. workers (Finegold, Gatta, Salzman, & Schurman, 2010; Fox & Royle, 2014; Marquardt, Nissley, Ozag, & Taylor, 2000; Rosenbaum, 2002; Shaw et al., 2006). This paradigmatic shift has been especially difficult for America’s most vulnerable population (Card & Mas, 2016; Shaw et al., 2006).

For state-level WIB leadership, time and money are both in short supply, and the demands on the WFD system continue to remain elevated as the impact on the labor market from the Great Recession lingers (Card & Mas, 2016; Van Horn, 2013). WIB leaders must learn from both success and failure and devise winning implementation strategies that maximize effectiveness in an environment of shrinking public funds.

Given the ambiguity in WIA language, states have been free to interpret the rules in ways that either facilitate or impede access to more intensive training services for high-risk populations. Some states developed a legacy of progressive interpretation, providing training service to a greater than average number of citizens. These states became, in a manner of speaking, *positive deviants* (Marsh, Schroeder, Dearden, Sternin, & Sternin, 2004) within the larger national WFD context.
The purpose of this study was to explore the perception of roles and strategies among state-level WIB chairs from progressive states. Understanding how this select group of WIB chairs approached challenges in the absence of a statutory mandate provides insight to other state leaders challenged to provide broader access to training service in the WIOA era.

**Research Questions**

The research questions that guided this study follow:

- How do state-level WIB chairs from progressive states understand their role and the responsibilities they have been given under federal workforce legislation?
- How do these leaders perceive their personal learning as a contributor to successful WFD leadership?
- From their perspective, what impact does the political environment play in the ability of state-level WIB chairs to effect change?
- How do state-level WIB chairs envision the role WIOA plays in shaping future workforce strategies in their respective states?

**Significance of the Study**

Although a substantial corpus of literature exists to support management theories related to charismatic leadership, transformational learning, and revolutionary organizational change in the private sector, relatively few empirical studies have explored the significant leadership challenges represented in the complex WFD ecosystem (Hebert, 2010).

Additionally, a unique opportunity existed for exploring the perceptions of WFD leadership as WIA was retired and the structure of WIOA took form. This critical period of federal policy transition provided a rare window through which to view the emerging thoughts of state-level leaders (Shinn, 2007). Political and WFD leaders from less
progressive states may benefit from the insights of state-level WIB chairs who have a strong legacy of providing intensive training service to vulnerable populations, which may prove useful as states navigate the requirements of WIOA.

**Theoretical Framework**

The role of theory in qualitative research remains a perennial topic of debate among scholars (Creswell, 2009; Tavallaei & Abu Talib, 2010; Yin, 2014). Anfara and Mertz (2006) offered three understandings of theory in qualitative studies: (a) Theory relates the chosen research methodology and the epistemologies underlying the approach, (b) theory has a broad and expansive role in qualitative inquiry, and lastly, (c) theory does not typically play a solid role in qualitative studies. Creswell (2009) expanded the role of theory, stating that “theory (or some other broad explanation) becomes the end point” (p. 63) of the work itself. The role of theory in quantitative research is far less ambiguous; the researcher seeks to confirm a hypothesis based on one or more theories.

In case study research, the researcher studies a particular individual, program, or event in depth for a period of time. Yin (2014) argued that case study research must be framed within a theoretical lens during the design process to align research questions, methods, analysis, and interpretation of findings. Theoretical frameworks provide the researcher with a vantage point from which he or she can “observe” and “perceive” elements of the phenomena being studied—while simultaneously understanding that there are always other elements that are imperceptible from the chosen perspective (Tavallaei & Abu Talib, 2010).

In social science, theories exist at multiple levels, including individual, organizational, group, and social theories. Stake (2006) noted that each case has an inner and
outer environment: “Certain components lie within the system, within the boundaries of the case; certain features lie outside” (p. 3). It is important to note that the case and the environment in which the case operates function as an integrated system, bonded within a hierarchical structure (Chan, 2006). Although the researcher may have difficulty drawing a line marking where the case ends and the external environment begins, the context and experience are useful concepts in generating knowledge (Stake, 2006).

For the purpose of this study, two theories provided orientation and theoretical focus. At the individual level, integrative collaborative leadership theory (Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Crosby & Bryson, 2010; Page, 2010) provided a reference for framing the role of state-level WIB chairs. At the organizational level, regime theory (Domhoff, 2006; Krasner, 1982; C. Stone, 1998, 2005; C. Stone & Worgs, 2004; Young, 2012) guided inquiry into the larger, geopolitical context of federal, state, and local WFD policy and implementation (Bates & Redmann, 2002).

The application of dual theoretical perspectives is congruent with the complex, multifaceted nature of the WFD leadership context (Crosby & Bryson, 2010; C. Stone, 2005). Problems within the workforce context transcend concerns of interpersonal dynamics and explore what transpires within groups and communities (Crosby & Bryson, 2010). As Page (2010) described, tactical actions of individual leaders may enhance civic capacity at the societal level. The success of leadership is not merely a function of personal skill and competency but is also subject to external factors that shape collective practice (Crosby & Bryson, 2010; Van Wart, 2013b).
Conceptual Framework

According to Rocco and Plakhotnik (2009), conceptual frameworks provide a way to describe the relationship of concepts to a research study. These tools provide a visual illustration of how concepts or theories relate to one another to “see where the overlaps, contradictions, refinements, or qualifications are” (Miles & Huberman, as cited in Rocco & Plakhotnik, 2009, p. 122).

As previously mentioned, two theoretical perspectives guided this empirical study. At the organizational level, the study considered a number of theories from the perspective of political science, including institutional theory (Dacin, Goodstein, & Scott, 2002), culturist theory (Eckstein, 1988), political theories founded on rational choice (Isaac, 2013; Page, 2010; C. Stone, 2005), pluralism (C. Stone, 2005), and the theory of policy streams (Kingdon, 2011). Regime theory’s compatibility with constructivist philosophy, and its explanatory power in complex, ambiguous political environments (Young, 2012), made it well suited for the WFD context.

Regime theory provides a framework for how to govern when power, authority, and critical resources are dispersed across public and private interests (Ferman, 2010; Mossberger & Stoker, 2001). Originally described by Steven Krasner (1982) in the international context, Clarence Stone (2005) reinterpreted the theory to explain how to govern in urban settings and how to create a stable vision that persists beyond the electoral cycle (Crosby & Bryson, 2005a). Regime theory describes the process of creating informal arrangements among elected officials and private parties so that governance can be conducted and policy implemented. Regimes are differentiated from coalitions in purpose and staying power: Regimes endure, whereas coalitions fade after accomplishing specific goals. The more a
political regime is structured to share power, the more likely it is that the coalition will be successful in change initiatives (Giloth, 2004).

Regime theory seeks to “understand why and how informal and formal arrangements are produced to support stable governing coalitions” (Stoker, as cited in Giloth, 2004, p. 16). According to C. Stone (2005), the degree to which players in a regime compete or cooperate differs based on the nature of the regime. In the WFD context, employment regimes are most interested in promoting their own survival and the jobs they provide. Performance regimes are built on a broad foundation of relationships, networks, and strong leaders who orient players within a wider civic context and therefore are more capable of achieving ambitious, complex outcomes (Giloth, 2004; Moynihan et al., 2011).

Regime theory has been used to describe the collaborative efforts needed to mobilize local WFD partners (Clarke, 2004; Giloth, 2004; S. R. Smith & Davis, 2004). Burns (2003) used the theory as a lens for viewing state takeover of an urban school system. Nonetheless, a review of the literature revealed scant application of regime theory as a construct for understanding the WFD context at the state level. Given that local governing authority is merely an illusion, or an artifact of acting on the authority of the state (Domhoff, 2006; C. Stone, 2005), regime theory was as relevant, if not more so, in the state environment than in the local context.

At the micro, or individual, scale, the theory of integrative leadership for collaborative governance provided a tactical framework that results in cross-agency or cross-sector collaboration and policy outcomes (Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Page, 2010). Although a plethora of leadership theories is found in scholarly literature, the vast majority of theories are dedicated to leaders in the private sector. Gabris, Golembiewski, and Ihrke (as cited in
Van Wart, 2013a) noted an immediate need to “improve on the emaciated condition of public leadership theory” (p. 521). Van Wart (2013a) defined administrative leadership as people, at any level, who manage or guide governmental, civil service, and nonprofit agencies for policy development and implementation. According to this definition, WFD was a sector in need of additional scholarly focus.

The progression of leadership theory has followed the same trajectory as economic epochs, according to Grachev and Rakitsky (2013). The three major epochs were characterized as (a) preindustrial, (b) industrial, and (c) postindustrial drivers of economic growth. Each era favored a leadership style best suited for the nature of work, resulting in economic success. Leadership styles included (a) craft-based, (b) technocratic or mechanistic, and (c) innovative or organic systems (Grachev, as cited in Grachev & Rakitsky, 2013).

Leadership theories from the preindustrial and industrial epochs do not adequately address the complexity and pace of change in the modern global economy. These traditional leadership models focus primarily on planning, prediction, and control (Houglum, 2012). According to many scholars, contemporary leadership theory has entered a critical juncture (Goldstein, Hazy, & Lichtenstein, 2010; Houglum, 2012; Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2008; Wheatley, 2006). In an increasingly complex world, the concept of control has been shown to be an illusion, or at least a construct that worked when the pace of change ran at a much slower rate.

Many postindustrial theories of leadership are rooted in complexity science, which Houglum (2012) posited offer a more ontologically and epistemologically congruent framework with the nature of reality. Although theories such as authentic leadership (Avolio,
Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009), transformational leadership (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013; Van Wart, 2003), and charismatic leadership (Graetz, 2000) shared a common focus on the management of people, rather than processes, they did not lend themselves directly to the public administration setting. Integrative leadership theory, a derivative of transformational leadership (Sun & Anderson, 2012), bridged the gap between private and civic spheres.

What was not well understood was the role that political regimes have in facilitating or inhibiting leadership tactics. Shinn (2007) shared an important observation of public policy leaders: “Administrators tend to think more about theory at the level of the individual behavior than about larger social structures” (p. 222). Unfortunately, the tendency to focus on individual behavior rather than social theory distorts our understanding and causes us to miss opportunities to improve public policy (Shinn, 2007).

Page (2010) called for additional research in and across more civic contexts to confirm integrative leadership approaches. As a point of departure, this study reviewed WFD from two theoretical perspectives: integrative leadership theory and regime theory. Each theory shares the common element of collaboration—as both a leadership skill and process outcome. This exploration of collaboration generated a richer understanding of what is needed to support America’s most vulnerable citizens. Figure 2 illustrates how the macro- and microenvironments interact within the WFD context, which formed the conceptual framework for the study.

At the individual level, leaders adopt tactics that facilitate collaboration, improving policy performance (Page, 2010) and converting potential civic capacity to realized civic capacity (Sun & Anderson, 2012). These leadership actions are situated within a larger, social construct that C. Stone (1998, 2005) described as the political regime.
Figure 2. Conceptual framework for integrative leadership of collations surrounded by the influence of the enduring political regime (Page, 2010; C. Stone, 2005; Sun & Anderson, 2012).

Research Methods

To explore the leadership perceptions of progressive state-level WIB chairs, I conducted a qualitative design with elements consistent with cross-case study design. Each participant represents a case, and the analysis reviewed the findings of one case in light of the others in the series (Stake, 2006).

Participants. The six volunteers that participated in the study were recruited from among a pool of fourteen incumbent state-level WIB chairs in states with a legacy of progressive policy performance. A sample size of six provided sufficient rich, thick text for data analysis (Marsh et al., 2004; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014), while also providing for the anonymity of study participants.

For the purpose of this inquiry, states that promoted policies that facilitated, rather than inhibited, training opportunities for citizens were deemed preliminary candidates. To be
considered a finalist for the progressive candidate pool, state support of public education was also considered. State WFD performance and K–12 education system ratings as published on Corporation for Enterprise Development’s (CFED; 2014) Assets and Opportunity Scorecard provided the data used in the selection process. Furthermore, selection criteria specified that participants were active state board chairs with greater than 1 year of service in this governor-appointed role. State WIB chairs from the progressive candidate pool were contacted using the information published in the 2014 Workforce Investment System State and Local Office listing by MII Publications.

**Data collection.** Semistructured interviews were used to collect data on the lived experiences of state WIB chairs. Questions were designed to elicit responses that addressed both individual and organizational perceptions of leadership. Interviews were done in real time, in a private setting that was conducive to personal conversation. Participants were asked to recall what they did, thought, said, and felt about their roles, responsibilities, and experiences leading their state WIBs.

In addition, participants were asked to complete the “Working Together: A Profile of Collaboration” survey (Chrislip & Larson, 1994). This validated survey instrument was used as a secondary data source, providing additional scientific rigor to the investigation. Other artifacts collected and reviewed included published state meeting minutes, WIB public reports, WIB Web sites, vision and mission statements, and other related public documents (Ansell & Gash, 2007; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014).

**Data analysis and verification.** Text analysis of interview transcripts was conducted using both inductive and deductive coding methods (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).
Common themes were derived from the literature review of integrative leadership and regime theory.

To verify the accuracy of the text analysis, a formative evaluation process was carried out with participants. Interviewees had the opportunity to confirm or deny the face validity of the results in anonymous feedback settings.

**Limitations of the study.** Interviews provide in-depth, rich data on the experience of transformational change agency; however, this method has some disadvantages that should be considered. First, interviews are time and labor intensive, requiring skilled interviewers to obtain accurate information. Second, the loose structure of the interview process relies on the analytical and interpersonal skills of the interviewer to extract essential themes from interview texts. Third, and perhaps most important to the understanding of leaders’ perceptions, a focus on past behaviors may not be representative of experiences in real time.

Although attempts were made to mitigate the shortcomings of the study design, it is important to note that this study includes a small, bounded cohort from a fairly homogeneous volunteer pool. Generalizations about the study findings are limited to this specific context.

**Chapter Summary**

In summary, the purpose of this cross-case study was to understand how state WIB chairs perceive leadership challenges operating within a complex environment. Specifically, the study asks, To what degree do leaders in this context use integrative leadership skills to facilitate policy performance? What lessons have they learned along their leadership journeys providing intensive services to our vulnerable citizens, and how might these be shared with other state leaders who face similar challenges with the implementation of WIOA?
In Chapter 1, I reviewed the unique history of the U.S. WFD system and described the complexity created by a network of regulations and service providers. The case was made that individual leaders make a difference, especially in a democratic, participative governance process. The transition to WIOA eliminates many barriers for securing services that were inherent to WIA, opening the road for more training opportunities for vulnerable Americans in all states.

WIB chairs from progressive states have a legacy of providing training services, despite structural barriers under WIA, and have valuable insights to share with state leadership who now venture down this path. Research questions, a general approach to the research design, and an undergirding conceptual framework were included as advance organizers for the study.

In Chapter 2, I conduct a more complete review of the scholarly literature underpinning this study. Included in this review are seminal works on regime theory, collaborative leadership in the WFD context, and the integrative leadership tactics that Page (2010) provided as a guide for collaborative success.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

The purpose of this study was to understand how state-level WIB chairs perceive the role they play as prime actors in the complex, loosely coupled WFD system. As the nation transitioned from the WIA and embraced new expectations of the WIOA, WIB leadership challenges have escalated.

In Chapter 1, I provided a brief overview of the U.S. WFD context, creating a general awareness of the issues facing American workers and employers. In this chapter, I expand on this theme by providing a more in-depth review of the trials facing American workers, especially those most vulnerable to the capricious nature of global economic shifts. This chapter includes a literature review of leadership and political theories that envelop the role of a state-level WIB leader. A cogent argument is built for selecting integrative leadership and regime theories for understanding the multifarious context.

U.S. Workforce Development Policy and Practice

Although a thorough assessment of WFD policy and praxis is beyond the scope of this literature review, a synopsis of legislative evolution informs one’s understanding of contemporary WFD challenges. Table 1 provides a summary of major federal legislation since 1930, when the United States instituted a formal strategy to elevate the country from the doldrums of the Great Depression.
Table 1

**Timeline of Major U.S. Federal Workforce Development Programs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1930s</td>
<td>New Deal</td>
<td>A series of new agencies, such as the Public Works Administration, the Works Progress Administration, and the Civilian Conservation Corps, designed to put Americans back to work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wagner–Peyser Act</td>
<td>Established the public labor job match exchange program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940s</td>
<td>GI Bill</td>
<td>Tuition assistance and supportive services provided for returning veterans to attend college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960s</td>
<td>Manpower Development Training Act</td>
<td>Short-term training courses to prepare recipients for entry-level positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work Incentive Program</td>
<td>Supplement to welfare policy providing job training to recipients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>Comprehensive Employment and Training Act</td>
<td>Public-service job creation program targeting unskilled and semiskilled jobs and training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>Job Training Partnership Act</td>
<td>Replaced Comprehensive Employment and Training Act and took a new approach to employment policy, with a focus on training and skill building rather than public job creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act</td>
<td>Established a “work-first” model of welfare that removes any notion that welfare is a social entitlement and severely restricts access to education and skills training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000s</td>
<td>Workforce Investment Act</td>
<td>Replaces JTPA and focuses on short-term training for immediate placement in the private sector; includes a three-tiered system of successive services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>American Recovery and Reinvestment Act</td>
<td>A “stimulus package” providing $3.95 billion for various WIA programs; of those funds, $1.25 billion was dedicated to states for dislocated worker programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010s</td>
<td>Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act</td>
<td>Eliminates the sequential offering of services and provides an emphasis on training as a best practice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Adapted from *Transforming the U.S. Workforce Development System: Lessons from Research and Practice*, by D. Finegold, M. Gatta, H. Salzman, and S. J. Schurman, 2010, Champaign, IL: Labor and Employment Relations Association, Figure 2.

**The New Deal.** The Hoover administration’s fumbling response to the 1928 stock market crash set the stage for the transformation of America’s social support system (Kettl,
2009). According to Katz (as quoted in Shaw et al., 2006), the widespread hardship of the Great Depression changed long-standing American values: “Poverty lost much of its moral censure as unemployment reached catastrophic levels” (p. 21). This paradigm shift opened a policy window (Kingdon, 2011), allowing President Franklin D. Roosevelt to champion progressive employment and training programs as part of the New Deal (Finegold et al., 2010; Shaw et al., 2006).

Although critics vehemently complained that Roosevelt’s actions were not only unconscionable but also unconstitutional (Kettl, 2009), F.D.R. prevailed. Between 1933 and 1936, the federal government established a variety of agencies, including the Public Works Administration, the Works Progress Administration, and the Civilian Conservation Corps, providing training to hundreds of thousands of unemployed men to qualify for subsidized employment in the construction industry (Finegold et al., 2010; Shaw et al., 2006). To match unemployed workers with extensive public works jobs, the Wagner–Peyser Act established a public labor exchange fashioning the federal–state partnership that evolved into the modern WFD system (Guzda, 1983).

Although education and training were not the main focus of the New Deal, they were included as a complementary strategy for reestablishing the marketability of unemployed workers (Finegold et al., 2010; Shaw et al., 2006). New Deal programs were vast; at its peak, the CWA alone employed 4.26 million workers—22% of America’s potential pre-WWII workforce (Katz, 2001).

**The GI Bill.** During WWII, large-scale sponsorship of workforce programs waned (Finegold et al., 2010); nonetheless, 6.5 million women entered the workforce seemingly overnight in support of the war effort (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013). In 1944, the
Serviceman’s Readjustment Act, otherwise known as the GI Bill, was signed into law (Finegold et al., 2010; Shaw et al., 2006). At the time of its enactment, the GI Bill represented the largest investment in adult education the United States had ever made (Finegold et al., 2010; Shaw et al., 2006). The act provided millions of veterans with tuition assistance and support services to attend college. According to Shaw et al. (2006), “in short, the GI Bill cemented the human-capital notion that economic well-being was best achieved through investing in education and training” (p. 22). After the passage of the GI Bill, attaining a college degree “was truly no longer the bastion of the privileged” (p. 22).

**Manpower Development Training Act.** For the next decade or longer, the country enjoyed a period of stable growth; however, a small economic setback from 1960 to 1961 propelled workforce issues back into the political limelight (Shaw et al., 2006). In response to President John F. Kennedy’s (as cited in Mackey, 2013) statement that “anyone who is honestly seeking a job and can’t find it deserves the attention of the United States government and the people” (p. 357), the federal government enacted the Manpower Development Training Act (MDTA) in 1962. MDTA catapulted citizens into the workforce by providing short (10- to 15-week) training programs that prepared students to attain entry-level positions leading to long-term employment and growth opportunities (Shaw et al., 2006).

**Work Incentive Program.** President Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society included the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, providing national focus on the War on Poverty. Over the next 10 years, major social support legislation, including Medicaid, Medicare, and a number of training programs, transformed social policy (Shaw et al., 2006). Coincident with the public welfare programs of the 1960s was a rapid expansion of the community college
system—another indication that education was considered essential for ascension into the middle class (Shaw et al., 2006).

By 1967, policy makers had reframed the role of education and training from a vehicle of personal empowerment to a force to reduce dependency on the welfare state (Finegold et al., 2010; Shaw et al., 2006). The Work Incentive Program (WIN) was created as a supplement to Aid to Families With Dependent Children. Through WIN, welfare recipients were prepared for low-skill jobs. For the first time, the link between poverty, welfare, and WFD was made explicit (Shaw et al., 2006).

**Comprehensive Employment and Training Act.** In 1973, Congress passed the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), which mimicked the job creation strategy of Roosevelt’s New Deal. The throwback legislation provided short-term federal jobs through the embedded public-service employment program. CETA’s primary focus was on “unskilled and semi-skilled positions like clerks, typists, guards, and road crews, along with jobs in maintenance, repair and warehouse work . . . [while not] provid[ing] any training” (Katz, 2001, p. 65). Like programs under the New Deal, CETA programs were developed and implemented by community-based organizations. Critics of CETA argued that programs were “aligned with the interests of the workers and not the employers” (Lafer, as cited in Finegold et al., 2010, p. 9). Nonetheless, CETA was remarkably successful in providing work experience for some 750,000 disadvantaged youths and adults (Finegold et al., 2010).

**Job Training Partnership Act.** The 1980s saw the ascent of Republican president Ronald Reagan, who perceived the twin problems of unemployment and poverty as deficiencies in an individual’s skill rather than as a dearth in job creation (Finegold et al.,
In 1982, CETA was dismantled and JTPA was ratified amid enthusiastic bipartisan support (Gatta, 2005). With JTPA, the balance of power in the system shifted from the employee to employers as the primary “client.” Lafer (as cited in Shaw et al., 2006) suggested that this heightened “involvement of the private sector in shaping programs to meet the needs of local employers” (p. 25) was the key to JPTA’s successful outcomes.

**Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act.** Concurrent with the Reagan administration, thought leaders George Gilder and Charles Murray popularized dissatisfaction with “perverse” social programs such as those designed to support WFD. Murray (as cited in Shaw et al., 2006) claimed the welfare system “encourage[ed] the lazy and indolent to seek . . . benefits” (p. 25). According to Somers and Block (2005), “the logic behind the [conservative] rhetoric [was] impeccable—if assistance is actually hurting the poor by creating dependence, then denying it is not cruel but compassionate” (p. 265).

Despite that the data did not support the conservative notion that welfare use created multiple generations of welfare-dependent families, the image of Reagan’s “welfare queens” resonated with public frustrations (Shaw et al., 2006, p. 21). In response to growing frustrations, Congress approved the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) in 1998. The work-first philosophy undergirding PRWORA dismissed the long-held belief in human-capital investment, inculcating the privilege of employer needs over those of workers and families (Finegold et al., 2010).

**Workforce Investment Act.** Within months of passing PRWORA, President Bill Clinton signed the federal WIA. Heralded as the end of “business as usual” (Decker & Berk, 2011, p. 906) for WFD, the law transformed the highly criticized JPTA by providing all citizens universal access to services. The law mandated collaboration among the various
public and private WFD partners, streamlining customer service activities under a *one-stop center* (Marquardt et al., 2000). The act authorized funding and established a system of state and local WFD governing structures, known as WIBs, to oversee the implementation of key aspects of the legislation (Decker & Berk, 2011; Hopkins et al., 2009). In a departure from previous regulations, WIA was conceived to be less proscriptive and sought to “more fully engage businesses” (Decker & Berk, 2011, p. 906).

**American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.** The 1990s challenged American WFD and economic policies on many levels. In 2009, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, also known as the stimulus package, injected nearly $800 billion into the unstable economy (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.). Although prominent economists such as Robert Gordon, Jeffery Frankel, and Robert Hall pronounced the Great Recession over in summer 2009, its effects on the American public are far from over (“The Recession,” 2010). The employment recovery rate following the 2007 recession has been far slower than any experienced since 1970. The lackluster “performance [of 2009] is by far the worst nine-month stretch following a recession of any postwar downturn” (p. 32).

**Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.** On July 22, 2014, President Barack Obama signed the WIOA, the reauthorization of WIA. Congress passed the act with widespread bipartisan and bicameral support, a rare event in the contemporary polarized political climate (Dervarics, 2014). WIOA was designed to streamline the existing WFD system and is purposefully demand-side driven, with a key focus on the needs of employers seeking to match candidates with job vacancies. WIOA addresses one of the most troublesome criticisms of WIA by eliminating barriers to training from the sequential tiered service model (Barnow & King, 2003; Barnow & Smith, 2004; Decker & Berk, 2011; Shaw
States that adopted a less progressive interpretation for training under WIA have been challenged to accommodate increased demand for more effective training and educational programs for their citizen-clients (Van Opstal, 2001). Table 2 provides a description of the key differences between WIA and WIOA legislation. Table 3 provides the implementation timeline for transition between WIA and WIOA.

The WFD Context

The U.S. WFD context is a complex, loosely coupled system (Giloth, 2004). The multiagency public-sector component includes state-run primary and secondary schools, community colleges, public colleges and universities, and an extended network of agencies at the federal, state, and local levels. These various agencies support a wide variety of related services, including unemployment insurance, job matching, welfare, apprenticeship programs, and employment training services. Activities are coordinated through a system of one-stop centers, recently rebranded under the WIOA as “America’s Job Centers.”

Funding for the complex network is provided by a number of different federal fiscal streams, each with its own set of eligibility guidelines and reporting requirements (Hebert & Waldon, 2007). A 2011 report conducted by the U.S. Government Accounting Office (GAO; 2011) identified 47 different federal programs that provide some form of funding for employment and training service. The sheer number of federal programs prompted Congress to request a review to determine if any of the programs were duplicative.

The GAO (2011) determined that of the 47 programs, only 3 had some overlap because of the unique population each funding stream was designed to serve. It is difficult to overstate the administrative challenges of coordinating 47 separate federal programs for one-stop staff.
Table 2
Comparison of Workforce Investment Act and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Legislation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of interest</th>
<th>WIA</th>
<th>WIOA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workforce investment boards</td>
<td>Majority of members from businesses; includes representatives with education, labor, community-based organizations, economic development, and one-stop partners.</td>
<td>Reduces the number of required members. Current structure is generally maintained: business majority, business “led,” and participation of organized labor; eliminates the requirement of one-stop partners on the board. Requires three committees focused on system/one-stop operations, youth, and individuals with disabilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance measures</td>
<td>Adult Program and Dislocated Worker Program performance measures: entry and retention into unsubsidized employment; earnings for adults 6 months after reentry—for dislocated workers relative to earnings of job dislocation; and attainment of credentials related to educational skills.</td>
<td>Creates a single set of measures for adults across all core programs authorized under the bill, including both occupational training and adult education, and a similar set of common measures across all youth-serving programs. Adult measures include unsubsidized employment and employed second Q and fourth Q after exit; median earnings at second Q after exit; receipt of a secondary diploma or recognized postsecondary credential in or within 1 year of exit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>Does not specify dollar amount; instead, states “such sums as necessary” for providing complete latitude to Congress for funding.</td>
<td>Includes specific funding levels for each fiscal year from 2015 to 2020 with a return to fiscal year funding from 2010 to the year 2017.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-stop centers (America’s Job Centers)</td>
<td>System must include at least one comprehensive physical center in each local area to provide access to core programs and activities carried out by one-stop partners.</td>
<td>State WIBs establish criteria for use by local boards to certify one-stop centers at least every 3 years that include a measure for continuous improvement. Must establish a common brand for products offered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment and training activities</td>
<td>Three levels of sequential service: core, intensive, and training. Training provided by means of individual training accounts (e.g., vouchers).</td>
<td>Eliminates the sequential offering of services and provides an emphasis on training. Increases the ability to provide on-the-job and incumbent worker training. Provides emphasis on industry-specific certifications and credentials.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3

**Key Statutorily Required Implementation Dates for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Required action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 22, 2014</td>
<td>The secretary of education begins to take appropriate actions to prove for an orderly transition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 18, 2015</td>
<td>The Department of Labor and Department of Education must publish Notices of Proposed Rulemaking to implement WIOA (no later than 180 days after enactment) relating to the transition and implementation of the act.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1, 2015</td>
<td>Provisions take effect, unless otherwise noted in the act (first full program year after enactment) and within secretaries’ transition authority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1, 2015</td>
<td>The WIA performance accountability system remains in effect for first full program year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 22, 2015</td>
<td>Template for performance reporting by state, local, and eligible training providers to report on outcomes achieved by the core programs must be developed by the secretary of labor and secretary of education within 12 months after the date of enactment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 22, 2016</td>
<td>The Departments of Labor and Education must publish Final Rules to Implement WIOA (18 months after enactment).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 3, 2016</td>
<td>This is the deadline for state Unified or Combined State Plan submission (120 days before second full program year); levels for new performance indicators are negotiated as part of approval of Unified or Combined State Plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 30, 2016</td>
<td>The Departments of Labor and Education must develop indicators of performance to measure effectiveness in serving employers (prior to second full program year).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1, 2016</td>
<td>One-stop infrastructure cost requirements, Unified or Combined State Plans, and new performance system requirements take effect.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Published October 16, 2014, by the U.S. Department of Education and retrieved from https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/wioa-implementation-dates.pdf*

The WFD system is managed at the state and local levels by a series of WIBs that comprise representatives from the private business sector, organized labor (not-for-profit), community-based organizations (generally nonprofits that provide training and wraparound support), and the public education sector mentioned previously. Representatives from the
business community are required by law to serve in the leadership role on the board and must occupy a majority of board seats. Figure 3 illustrates the organizational structures embedded within the loosely coupled WFD ecosystem.

Figure 3. The workforce development (WFD) system. The WFD system includes members from the public, private, and nonprofit (or not-for-profit) sectors. Public-sector partners include representatives from a variety of government agencies that oversee 47 federal funding streams as well as public primary, secondary, and higher education communities. Private-sector partners include business leaders and may include for-profit training providers or other private interests. Nonprofit partners may include community-based organizations, labor unions, and citizen volunteers for a variety of programs (e.g., adult literacy).

The Role of Public Administration

The WFD system is a classic example of both the strength and weakness of American democracy. As the evolution of the WFD program demonstrates, democracy remains a fluid, dynamic system capable of changing as conditions shift—sometimes abruptly, as was the case with the New Deal (Finegold et al., 2010; Kettl, 2009; Shaw et al., 2006).

In the last half-century, the pace of change intensified, stemming in part from advances in technology, changes in population demographics, the financialization of global markets, a shift toward a service economy, and social equality movements (Fox & Royle,

Understanding how the government approaches change requires an appreciation for the tensions between the rule of law and the reality of public administration (Kettl, 2009). The problem of balancing governmental power with individual freedoms is not new. Many political scholars (Clark, 1999; Kettl, 2009; Strayer, 1970; Weingast, 1997) have studied this struggle, harkening back to the day when England’s King John signed the Magna Carta. What is clear from this scholarship is that the rule of law that limited the power of kings is manifest today in labyrinthine administrative complexity (Kettl, 2009).

The conflict between individual liberty and the power of government intensified during the Progressive Era (Kettl, 2009). As a scholar of political science, President Woodrow Wilson (as quoted in Kettl, 2009) pragmatically described the delicate balance of power and ideologies:

If I see a murderous fellow sharpening a knife cleverly, I can borrow his way of sharpening the knife without borrowing his probable intention to commit murder with it; and so, if I see a monarchist dyed in the wool managing a public bureau well, I can learn his business methods without changing one of my republican spots. (p. 12)

Kettl (2009) suggested that Wilson’s pragmatic extension of legal boundaries was inevitable given the excesses of the elite during the Gilded Age. As governmental programs became more complex and embraced interagency and cross-sector collaborations—as required by CETA, WIA, and WIOA—the strain on the undergirding rule of law rose to the breaking point. Gaus (1950) foresaw the shifting landscape some 60 years ago, arguing that traditional restraints on public administrators to be accountable to citizens, courts, and legislators were inadequate to meet society’s needs.
In simpler times, the government delegated discretionary authority to administrative leaders in hierarchical organizations with clearly defined borders (Kettl, 2006, 2009). Decisions could be easily traced from the policy makers who envisioned legislation through the public administrators who carried the intent to practice. As evidenced by the workforce context, times are no longer simple—mandated collaborations blur the lines between the executive and legislative branches of government and with nongovernmental agencies of all description (Page, 2010).

WFD collaborations bring together multiple organizations, each operating within its own legal tradition, making it difficult to establish and enforce a single rule of law to guide their actions (Kettl, 2009). In Kettl’s words, “like many binary star systems, in which stars orbit around each other, there is a complex interaction and exchange of forces but neither star’s gravity controls the other” (p. 13). Within a democratic society, the central theme of bureaucracy is to create an administrative system that is strong enough to be effective but not so overpowering that it tramples democratic principles.

Compounding the difficulties of complex program coordination are the nature of the problems social policies are meant to address. Public administration, with its cadre of professional practitioners, is perfectly suited to solving some public concerns—streets getting paved, homes being built, sanitary sewer systems to carry away wastes being established, and children being educated. Though all these accomplishments of modern society are truly phenomenal in the history of mankind, in comparison to the scope and complexity of global warming, or chronic poverty and unemployment, they are relatively simple problems to address. In 1973, Rittel and Webber warned that the low-hanging fruit of public problems has
been plucked and that what lie before us are the “wicked” (p. 155), persistent problems that are ill defined and complicated by multiple causality.

Wicked problems are those that are elusive, not well understood, and difficult to measure to what degree interventions make an impact. According to Rittel and Webber (1973), nearly all public policy issues are wicked—be it the “location of a new freeway, the modification of school curricula, or the confrontation of crime” (p. 160). Problems of this type share a number of unfortunate characteristics:

- There is a lack of a definitive formulation.
- There is no clear end point.
- Solutions are not dichotomous (i.e., good–bad, true–false).
- There is a lack of success criteria.
- Every attempt to resolve issues counts significantly (failures bear enormous cost).
- Every problem is unique.
- Every problem is a symptom of another problem.

The nonlinearity of wicked problems, as clearly evidenced by the last two bullet points, confounds American bureaucrats and scholars (Rittel & Webber, 1973). Professional management practice was formed within the framework of Newtonian mechanistic physics (Rittel & Webber, 1973; Wheatley, 2006). Unfortunately, the linear logic of Newtonian physics is of little value in complex, interdependent, persistent problems. Our predilection toward prediction and control runs deep in management theory, and the application of nonlinear, complex open system practice is still evolving (Goldstein et al., 2010; Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2008).
Increasingly, problems spill over jurisdictional borders, and the rigid organizational structures that served us well in dealing with simple problems have become barriers to success in a nonlinear environment. As the world becomes more interdependent (Crosby & Bryson, 2005a), it manifests complexity that requires flexible responses (Page, 2010; Schneider & Somers, 2006). The inability of governmental agencies to adequately respond to complex problems is readily apparent, and the public’s tolerance is waning (Kettl, 2006). According to Kettl, “citizens understandably have little patience for the ‘not my problem’ answer to requests for help, even if the complexity of the system often leaves citizens to the wrong door” (p. 15).

Political gridlock from an increasingly polarized society and the rise of mass media exacerbate the issue. Rauch (1994) claimed that we have reached a point of “demosclerosis” (p. 17), a progressive loss of government’s ability to adapt to the environment and respond to current crises. The drop in public confidence of government intervention leads to a diminished sense of government’s role in both our past and future success (Van Wart, 2013a).

**Research and Theory in WFD**

WFD is a wicked problem, as defined by Rittel and Webber (1973). When the Clinton administration declared that it was ending “business as usual” for the dual policies of welfare and WFD, what the administration really meant was that it was outsourcing the delivery of public services to a complicated network of for-profit and nonprofit contractors (Mead, 2004; Riccucci, 2004). Public administrators assumed the role of coordinator (Kettl, 2006) in the emerging WFD landscape.
Scholarly research in this area has grown steadily since the implementation of WIA. In their literature review, Beck and Boulton (2012) reported more than 100 articles devoted to the health care sector alone. That said, fewer than 10% were directed toward informing workforce policy (Beck & Boulton, 2012). Public administrators and WFD policy makers struggle with wicked problems, yet scholarly literature designed to explore and understand the changing landscape is scarce (Crosby & Bryson, 2005a, 2010; Van Wart, 2013a). Gabris, Golembiewski, and Ihrke (as referenced by Van Wart, 2013a) called for researchers to “improve the emaciated condition of public leadership theory” (p. 521). Though the call to action may be more hyperbole than academic discourse, the gap in the literature warrants scholarly attention.

In 1936, the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues was founded to bridge the gap between the knowledge generated in academic environments and the work to be done to improve the public good (Shinn, 2007). Given the state of the U.S. economy at the time, it is no wonder that the axiom of “sound science leads to sound policy” (p. 215) would capture the American imagination. Academics posed difficult questions for policy makers, such as “who profits from public policies and how do the groups that do . . . secure distributive outcomes that favor them?” (Isaac, 2013, p. 366).

Shinn (2007) recommended that researchers wishing to impact social policy pay particular attention to executives at all levels, especially those in public administration. In describing the American form of democracy, she stated, “Our forebears realized that administrative agencies make many important decisions with profound influence on individual lives, and that social science can improve [the quality of] those decisions” (p. 216).
To influence the direction of public policy requires a distinctly different mind-set than is typical of academia, according to Shinn (2007). First, new knowledge must be accessible to those who craft social policy, who often find esoteric concepts, complex conceptualizations, and conflicting language problematic (Shinn, 2007; Van Wart, 2013b). Equally important is the timeliness of data transfer: Information received before the policy window opens (Kingdon, 2011) may fall on barren ground, and if it is received too late—after a course of action has been set—it will not be considered (Shinn, 2007). The fact that timing matters means researchers must be committed to answering questions when they are asked, not when they are theoretically or empirically relevant for the literature.

From a public administration perspective, much of the work in implementing policy rests in the interpretation of law by agency professionals. Regulations, as stand-alone documents, cannot contain the corpus of intricate detail required for successful implementation. According to Kettl (2009), “administrators interpret the rule of law, [and] as they bring it to life, the law loosens its grasp on their rule” (p. 13). Administrative discretion is the inevitable result of any new legislation, and like policy development, interpretation and implementation have a window of influence that opens and closes. The interpretive window for WIOA is bounded by statutory timelines, as illustrated by Table 3.

Influencing policy and interpretation requires action: Researchers must take the knowledge to officials and not expect that publication in an academic journal is a successful communication strategy (Shinn, 2007). Shinn urged researchers to consider the practicality of potential solutions: Solutions that are costly in either monetary or social capital are unlikely to be well received.
Governance Theory

To understand how empirical lessons can be applied to public policy requires a step backward—to explore what is meant by governance. According to Keefer (2009), governance is one of the most elastic concepts in social science. Definitions of governance generally include the processes governments employ to respond to citizens and provide core services, such as property rights, a rule of law, and decision making for the public good. In the United States, the prevailing political theory since the early 1990s has been deliberative democracy (Dryzek, 2004). This form of governance emerged to replace adversarial and managerial modes of policy making and implementation, primarily because of a long history of failure (Ansell & Gash, 2007). Expressed in its most elemental form, deliberative democracy ensures that those subject to a public decision have the right to participate in the process of making the decision.

The importance of deliberative democracy, democratic renewal, and citizen participation in governance as a means to redistribute power from traditional public administrators has grown over the last five decades (McGuire, 2013). This trend has been called intergovernmental management, collaborative management, and collaborative federalism (McGuire, 2013). Ansell and Gash (2007) referred to the process of bringing public, private, and nonprofit stakeholders together for the purpose of consensus-oriented decision making as collaborative governance.

Regardless of the terminology, the fundamental tenets guiding collaborative governance are the same (Ansell & Gash, 2007; McGuire, 2013). This approach to democracy has six key principles:
• It is initiated by public agencies.
• It includes nonstate actors.
• Participants engage in decision making rather than being consultants to the process.
• The process is formally organized.
• Decision-making processes drive for consensus, but alternative decision-making devices may be used in the case of a stalemate. (Ansell & Gash, 2007)

Detractors of collaborative governance are quick to point out the power imbalances that are inherent in any cross-sector engagement (Ansell & Gash, 2007; McGuire, 2013). “There is no doubt that an assessment of the asymmetries of influence is relevant and useful, but such an assessment must be tempered by the fact that imbalances are inevitable in a federal system” (McGuire, 2013, p. 109). McGuire echoed Shinn’s (2007) evaluation of the pragmatism of collaborative governance actors; debates about whether critical public services should be a public or nonprofit priority are irrelevant—the best administrative managers, though not completely apolitical, are primarily concerned about getting the job done.

Dryzek (2004) noted that the sheer number of political theorists acclaiming the benefits of deliberative democracy should generate great diversity of thought, “but what is now striking is less the variety, but the uniformity” (p. 144) of theoretical perspectives. For good or ill, contemporary political discourse has fixated on deliberative democratic perspectives (Dryzek, 2004).

**Regime Theory**

In the post-WWII era, neorealism became the dominant theory of political relations in the international arena (Litta, 2012), rising in popularity at about the same time as neoliberal
economics. Neorealist philosophy suggests that structural constraints, rather than personal strategies—motivation or egoism—determine political behavior. Although in its infancy, new theories of international integration began to surface in scholarly literature from this philosophical perspective.

In 1975, John Ruggie penned his seminal article that laid the foundation for regime theory. Ruggie argued that increased interdependence between nation-states is poised to change the course of human history. Drawing on organizational and sociological theory, Ruggie predicted that international institutions would take the form of epistemic communities, regimes, and formal organizations (Keohane, 1984). Ruggie (1975) defined a regime as “a set of mutual expectations, rules and regulations, plans, organizational energies and financial commitments, which have been accepted by a group of states” (p. 570).

Regimes form because equal actors voluntarily coalesce to achieve a common goal. Young and Osherenko (1993) posited “self-interested parties engaged in interactive decision-making approach a problem in contractarian terms and seek to coordinate their behavior to reap joint gains” (p. 11). In stark contrast to the theory of hegemonic stability, Keohane (1984) argued that regimes form because there is an economic demand for cooperation in an imperfect global marketplace, not because the hegemons desire such affiliations.

According to Haggard and Simmons (as quoted in Litta, 2012), “regimes are examples of cooperative behavior, and facilitate cooperation, but cooperation can happen in the absence of established regimes” (p. 45). Regimes are intentionally constructed, and although only legitimate governmental actors can join regimes (at least by purist definitions), regimes may include any number of nongovernmental agents, such as interest groups,
community members, and private companies (Litta, 2012). Young and Zürn (2006) described a regime as a

social institution created to respond to the demand for governance relating to specific issues arising in a social setting that is anarchical in the sense that it lacks a centralized public authority or a government in the ordinary meaning of the term. (p. 121)

Stephen Krasner (as cited in Nieman, 2007) defined regimes as sets of norms, principles, rules, and decision-making processes around which actors converge to address a given policy or issue.

According to Litta (2012), states choose to form a regime when they cannot solve a problem unilaterally; simply put, they are formed to address wicked problems. The success of a regime is not guaranteed and depends on the quality of the cooperation among the actors (Oye, 1985). Litta (2012) argued that the success of a regime is dependent on two factors: the nature of the problem to be solved and the problem-solving capability of the actors. Table 4 summarizes Litta’s conceptualization of regime genesis and the probability of regime success.

Ideally, actors in the regime have a common understanding of the problems they are addressing. When problems are well understood, Litta (2012) characterized the problem as “benign” and theorized that solving such a simple issue requires only coordination efforts to provide effective relief.

When problems are more complicated and investments in capital and energy are needed to generate knowledge about the problem, states begin to calculate the relative risks and benefits to cooperating in a regime. If all the actors understand the problem in the same
way and have roughly the same menu of solutions selected, the likelihood the regime will be
successful is high.

Table 4

*Configuration of Sources of Different Regimes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regime effectiveness</th>
<th>Problem structure</th>
<th>Problem-solving capability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>Benign; state of knowledge good</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Benign/malign</td>
<td>Scores are intermediate or Scores are a combination of positive and negative values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ineffective</td>
<td>Malign; state of knowledge poor</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Adapted from *Regimes in Southeast Asia: An Analysis of Environmental Cooperation* by H. Litta, 2012, New York: Springer, Table 7.

In the case of complex, wicked problems, it is unlikely that all the actors in the
regime will agree on the nature of the problem, the criticality of the issue, or the costs and
benefits of various solutions. In this instance, Litta (2012) argued, the probability of regime
success is very low. In essence, actors in the regime engage in a high-stakes version of the
classic Prisoner’s Dilemma—where cooperation is the only course that leads to optimal
results.

Regime theory has been used as a way of understanding international economic
interests, environmental activism, and human rights initiatives. According to Young (2012),
one of the most compelling accomplishments of regime analysis is the utility it has in
understanding complex causality—situations where relationships are nonlinear and
experience multiple feedback loops, as is seen with complex adaptive systems (Uhl-Bien &
Marion, 2008; Young, 2012). It is an approach that is resilient to turbulence and therefore
well suited to dealing with wicked problems (Crosby & Bryson, 2005b; C. Stone, 2005;
Young, 2012). Regime analysis is instructive when the usefulness of regression analysis is in question (Young, 2012). As such, regime analysis is compatible with research methodologies rooted in constructivist philosophy.

Regime theory should not be confused with the more general pluralism, which is merely the absence of rule by a cohesive, elite ruling class (C. Stone, 2005). Pluralism assumes that all issues are waged on a single plane; however, regime theory accounts for the multidimensional complexity of both personal and organizational or system-level actions (C. Stone, 2005). Likewise, regime theory is not merely a vehicle for managing public–private partnerships, whose mission does not include decision making for the public good (Ansell & Gash, 2007).

Young (2012) differentiated a regime (institutions that are specialized to a particular issue) from an institution (a collection of rights, rules, and legal personalities that often has physical assets such as an office or personnel). Although the theory has much in common with institutional theory, regime theory attends to matters of public good, economic vitality, and social justice by considering those who do not meet the threshold for participation in the planning process (C. Stone, 2005). Institution theory does not include the ethical dimension, nor does it consider issues of public good (Dacin et al., 2002). A guiding heuristic of regime theory is that the nature of the problem determines who comes to the planning table, and as such, it can be differentiated from other rational choice models.

Clarence Stone (2005) was among one of the first scholars to conceptualize regime theory in the urban, rather than international, settings. C. Stone’s (1989) seminal work in this space involved an analysis of racial politics and urban redevelopment in Atlanta, Georgia. The genius of regime theory, according Mossberger and Stoker (2001), is the synthesis of
politics, economics, pluralism, and institutionalism. When viewed through the lens of regime 
theory, democratic governance is complex, yet despite the reality of universal suffrage, the 
political process is not open and penetrable by all parties (C. Stone, 2005). Why would the 
“one person, one vote” ideal central to pluralism be insufficient to provide for a level playing 
field? Some stakeholders lack the time, energy, or liberty to engage in the robust and lengthy 
and economic inequalities limit the engagement of vulnerable populations:

Although politics is not a process irrevocably closed to any group, meaningful 
political influence rests on the ability to meet important threshold tests. For those in 
the lower strata of the system of social stratification, meeting those tests involves a 
long and difficult journey. Understanding that journey is the task of urban regime 
analysis. (p. 313)

Robert Giloth (2004) championed the use of regime theory as the framework for 
evaluating the Jobs Initiative, an 9-year, $30 million program launched in 1995 to foster 
inovation in WFD for six large urban settings. Funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, 
the project focused on the needs of America’s most vulnerable population—inner-city 
adults—in an effort to thwart the proliferation of multigenerational poverty in urban 
environments. Stone’s assertion of collaborative governance as an effective device to give a 
voice to vulnerable populations is congruent with the WFD environment.

A key finding of the Jobs Initiative was that a legacy of failure and prior program 
mismanagement creates a culture of distrust and skepticism in citizens (Ansell & Gash, 2007; 
Giloth, 2004; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984). This culture, although completely 
understandable, inhibits the ability of the collaborative to move forward with the agenda. 
Time and energy must be spent on developing a sense of trust and reciprocity among 
stakeholder communities if the regime is to be effective (Ansell & Gash, 2007; Giloth, 2004).
Ansell and Gash (2007) offered a model of collaborative governance that underscores the importance of initial conditions to the ultimate success of the regime. The 2007 model of collaborative governance is provided in Figure 4.

![Figure 4. A model of collaborative governance. Adapted from “Collaborative Governance in Theory and Practice” by C. Ansell and A. Gash, 2007, Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 18, p. 550.](image)

Collaborative governance outcomes are directly impacted by precedent conditions, including a past history of cooperation or conflict as noted by the Jobs Initiative report (Ansell & Gash, 2007; Giloth, 2004). Equally important are power dynamics of the members of the collaborative. Power may manifest as money, physical resources, or knowledge in this conceptualization of antecedent conditions (Ansell & Gash, 2007; McGuire, 2013). Both a legacy of trust, or the lack thereof, and the balance of power among members of the
collaborative are critical to the willingness of stakeholders to coalesce into a collaborative governance structure.

Central to Ansell and Gash’s (2007) model are the collaborative processes used by stakeholders to ensure legitimate decisions are made. All members of the regime must be committed to the process, exhibiting openness to exploring mutual gains, shared ownership of the fidelity of the process, and willingness to accept the outcomes even if they do not align completely with their personal interests. The collaborative process is more likely to be successful when there is a common definition of the problem and members of the collaborative share a vision of possible solutions.

Face-to-face communication is essential both to generating common understanding and to providing a space for good faith negotiations. Understanding that wicked problems are not solved overnight, Ansell and Gash (2007) recommended that small, incremental wins be celebrated to help maintain momentum during the long-term process. Consensus building, in particular, requires an extended period of time—and there are no substitutes or quick “work-around” techniques that can expedite the process (Coglianese, 1997; Coglianese & Allen, 2004; Wondolleck & Yaffe, 2003). Simply put, adherence to democratic principles and practices is messy, time consuming, and often ugly in the making, but in the end, democracy can result in a virtuous cycle of progress.

Likewise, institutional design provides the basic ground rules for interactions within the collaborative setting (Ansell & Gash, 2007). Establishing and enforcing rules of engagement lends an air of legitimacy to the collaborative process. Giloth (2004) described the emerging facility of regimes to successfully coalesce, make decisions, and craft outcomes as increasing civic capacity. Although regime theory came into vogue in the early 1980s,
many scholars (Giloth, 2004; C. Stone, 2005; C. Stone & Worgs, 2004; Young, 2012) have agreed that there is still much to learn from this theoretical construct.

Sun and Anderson (2012) provided a model of civic capacity building that illuminates the subprocesses involved in mobilizing groups to engage in civic ventures. The model expanded the work of Dent (2008), who proposed that a community’s civic capacity comprises three parts: (a) civic enterprise, (b) civic capital, and (c) civic competency. Similar to the model that Ansell and Gash (2007) proposed, Dent (2008) argued that a shared history of prior cooperation impacts a community’s ability to perform successfully in the future. Having established a bank of social capital, communities can more easily mobilize existing relationships and knowledge bases for new civic engagements.

Civic capacity exists when civic drive, civic connection, and civic pragmatism intersect, according to Sun and Anderson (2012). Figure 5 illustrates the model of the subconstructs of civic capacity. This approach to civic capacity was described as “the combination of interest and motivation to be engaged in public service and the ability to foster collaborations through the use of one’s social connections and though the pragmatic use of processes and structures” (p. 317). This conceptualization was both unique and compelling—the authors use the individual rather than the collective as the unit of analysis. This novel approach broke from the long tradition of describing civic capacity in sociological or political terms and offered a new perspective linking successful collaborative governance to the corpus of leadership theory.
Leadership Theory

Leadership theory has a long tradition, evolving over time from the study of an individual leader to the relationship of leaders and followers and, lastly, to the broader spectrum of context and culture. Over the past quarter-century, leadership inquiry has included diverse organizations, including public, private, and not-for-profit establishments across the globe (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009). Seminal author James MacGregor Burns (as cited in Van Wart, 2003) surmised that leadership is one of the most highly observed and least understood phenomena on earth.

Van Wart (2013b) classified leadership theory into major categories, including (a) classical, (b) managerial or transactional, (c) transformational, and (d) horizontal or collaborative leadership. Each of these theoretical perspectives offers interesting insights; however, some are more useful as tools for understanding the challenges of leadership within the WFD context.

**Classical leadership theory.** For centuries, there has been consensus among scholars that leaders are different from followers; and by fate, providence, or genetics, they were
endowed with superior skill—destined to find their place in history (Cawthon, 1996). Most academics subscribed to the belief that “leaders are born, not made” and that “the Great Man will arise when the need is great.” Although contemporary scholars are unlikely to challenge the idea that some individuals are endowed with certain natural ability for leadership, the demands of contemporary leadership require a commitment to lifelong learning (Van Wart, 2013b).

**Transactional leadership theory.** With the rise of machine production during the Industrial Revolution, the role of leadership changed dramatically. Transactional theories of leadership describe the fundamental relationship between leaders and followers (or management and labor) as a series of rational transactions (Van Wart, 2013b). This approach assumes that behavior can be shaped by a system of rewards; therefore, the needs of followers are met if performance meets the expectations of their leaders. According to Bass (1985), transactional leaders (a) recognize and obtain resources that followers need for effective performance, (b) exchange rewards for efforts, and (c) are responsive to their followers’ immediate self-interests if these interests are related to the completion of work. Transactional leaders “encourage commitment and ‘empower’ employees to be receptive to change and technological innovation” (Caldwell, 2003, p. 131).

Numerous scholars have shared the opinion that transactional leadership theory is dependent on hierarchical structures and is too power-centric and disconnected from ethical considerations to remain relevant to our understanding of contemporary organizational science (Van Wart, 2013a, 2013b; Schneider & Somers, 2006; Sun & Anderson, 2012). While leading in the WFD context will have some transactional leadership components, the
lack of authority in cross-agency and cross-sector partnerships mandated by the 21st-century regulatory environment makes this approach doubtful.

**Administrative leadership.** Although the literature on leadership in the public sector pales in comparison to that of the private sector, a small number of scholars have explored this void. Public-sector leadership is closely coupled to system reform, so rising scholarly interest after 1992 suggests some connection with the shifts in public policy related to the larger geopolitical environment (Van Wart, 2003). Van Wart offered a number of potential definitions of leadership in the administrative context, but to date, a universal definition has yet to be realized.

Like transactional leadership, administrative leadership has generally been considered to include legitimate lines of authority between leaders and followers, with leaders having the power to initiate change (Crosby & Bryson, 2005b; Wallner, 2008). Additionally, administrative leadership theories have not spoken directly to the challenges private, for-profit concerns face (Van Wart, 2013a).

**Transformational leadership.** Juxtaposed with transactional leaders, transformational leaders are those with a special responsibility to understand the changing environment and who have the capacity to facilitate dramatic change. Transformational leaders energize followers in a way that transcends the abilities of a transactional leader. Transformational leadership scholars emphasize the creation of a compelling future vision as a core competency (Van Wart, 2003). James MacGregor Burns (as cited in Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013) described the interaction of transformational leaders and followers as one where “leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality” (p. 6).
Transformational leadership theory evolved, in part, from the recognition that the pace of change in modern society is accelerating and that our leaders need to be competent to facilitate these transformations (Van Wart, 2013a). Leaders’ capacity to describe a future full of immediacy and promise was considered essential to organizational success (Crosby & Bryson, 2005a). Likewise, their ability to make sense of a world rattled with constant change bound followers to a worthy cause (Page, 2010). The ambidextrous nature of these leaders allows them to successfully toggle between transactional and transformational competencies as situations dictate (Sun & Anderson, 2012).

While many tenets of transactional leadership align with the needs of contemporary WFD, the expectation of authority over followers was considered incongruent with collaborative settings (Sun & Anderson, 2012). Likewise, this theory does not account for the multitude of goals each member of the collaborative brought to the engagement. The theory fails to address a commitment to the community or the adherence to democratic principles vital to initiatives designed to provide for the common good (Sun & Anderson, 2012).

Transformational leadership has been described as having three major subclassifications: (a) authentic leadership, (b) charismatic leadership (Sun & Anderson, 2012), and (c) servant leadership (Houglum, 2012).

**Authentic leadership.** Authentic leadership theory extends transformational leadership by including influences from positive psychology (Avolio et al., 2009). It is “a process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context, which results in both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviors on the part of leaders and associates, fostering positive self-development” (Avolio et al., 2009, p. 424).
Authentic leaders depend on an unwavering internal moral code to regulate personal behavior. Success in the public arena, however, often requires that a leader demonstrate political savvy—often displaying different facets of himself or herself in different circumstances to achieve results (Sun & Anderson, 2012). Identity malleability, though essential to producing results, is in conflict with the philosophical rose line of this leadership theory.

**Charismatic leadership.** Within the transformational leadership literature, charismatic and entrepreneurial leaders have been considered two variants of the genre (Van Wart, 2003). Charismatic theories and research focus on the process of influence and specifically on the behaviors that inspire higher action levels of followers. According to Graetz (2000), charismatic leadership is personalized and focuses on creating environments that reinforce a new way of doing things or a new value system. Entrepreneurial leadership theories place more emphasis on the risk-taking propensity of leaders than on influencing skill (Nicholson, 1998).

Like leaders in other transformational leadership theories, charismatic leaders enjoy a position of power over followers, which is incompatible with the WFD context (Sun & Anderson, 2012; Van Wart, 2013b). Additionally, charismatic leadership has a “darker” side—one that is often described as manipulative—where leaders use their charm and powers of persuasion to make others see the world as they do, not honoring the authentic voices of followers (Sun & Anderson, 2012). Headstrong leaders may neglect democratic principles in pursuit of their own agendas (Van Wart, 2013b), which often spells disaster in the public sector. Van Wart (2013b) warned that charismatic leaders may believe themselves to be transformative or servant leaders, when in fact they are charismatic narcissists.
**Servant leadership.** Servant leadership is a variant of transformational leadership that takes a long-term view of the process to reimagine society. Servant leadership delves deeply into the internal motivation and worldview of the leader. Robert Greenleaf introduced this concept in 1997, having been powerfully impacted by the writings of Herman Hesse. The leader is *primus inter pares*, that is, first among equals, and it is the co-creative nature of the interactions with followers that affords the leader this role rather than positional power structures. One major tenet of the servant leader model is that the followers are expected to be wiser, freer, and more autonomous than with other leadership models. Therefore, as the environment changes, and new skills are needed to adapt, a new *primus* eventually emerges to take the community forward (Avolio et al., 2009; Houglum, 2012; Parris & Peachy, 2013).

In the WFD context, mistakes are costly and the needs are immediate, as the country understands in the wake of the Great Recession. The long-range, organic nature of servant leadership does not lend itself to a timely response for a population in need.

**Complexity leadership.** The complexity of wicked problems, and the dynamism of mandated collaborations, suggested complexity leadership as a useful lens for understanding the WFD context. Contemporary theories of leadership are rooted in complexity science, which Houglum (2012) posited offers a more ontologically and epistemologically congruent framework with the nature of reality. In this approach, leadership is an interactive system of dynamic, unpredictable agents that interact with one another through a series of feedback loops, producing outcomes such as knowledge generation, knowledge dissemination, and strategic adaptation (Avolio et al., 2009; Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2008). Through this theoretical lens, “leadership can be enacted through any interaction in an organization. . . . Leadership is an emergent phenomenon within complex systems” (Hazy, as quoted in Avolio et al., 2009,
Though complexity leadership theory is compatible with some elements of the WFD context, it is predicated on a leader–follower exchange (Sun & Anderson, 2012) that is not present in the workforce space.

**Leadership in the WFD Context**

After decades of economic upheaval and social change, civic leadership has evolved to the point where “no one has the authority or influence to tell anyone else what to do unilaterally, and the complexity of the issues strains our capacity to comprehend how we might make progress” (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013, p. 3). Civic leadership, in the realm of WFD, contends not only with the complexity of the public-service sector, the multitude of stakeholders to be considered, and the constraints of multiple regulatory requirements; it is also challenged to interface with the private and not-for-profit sectors. Given this context, it is clear that progress requires leadership capabilities transcending those based in authority and position.

In the 1980s and 1990s, several scholars, such as Curtis Johnson, John Parr, Neil Pierce, and Bill Potapchuk, observed that a few communities in the United States were able to make more significant improvements in civic capacity than the norm (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013). Researchers found these communities rejected the default civic culture of the “war of the parts against the whole” (p. 8) and adopted a more collaborative approach to enact progress. Inclusion, rather than exclusion, appeared to be the key to civic success. According to Peirce and Johnson (1997), “the table gets larger—and rounder” (p. 10), “the agenda gets tougher” (p. 22), and “no one’s excused” (p. 34) from this new planning table.

Sometimes described as shared, collaborative, or distributed, integrative leadership is a hybrid of complexity leadership (Avolio et al., 2009) and transformational leadership (Sun
& Anderson, 2012) in which historically hierarchical structures are abandoned for team-based systems. Like transformative leaders, integrative leaders inspire followers to higher order thinking. The most widely accepted definition of shared leadership is offered by Pearce and Conger (2003) as “a dynamic, interactive influence process among individuals in groups for which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of a group or organizational goals or both” (p. 1). In this paradigm, leadership is distributed widely across the organization rather than concentrated on any particular individual.

Collaborative or integrative leadership is well suited to address wicked problems (Van Wart, 2013b), where wide debate helps bring clarity and definition to issues (Page, 2010). Integrative leadership brings together nonprofits, government, community, and businesses to solve problems for the betterment of society (Page, 2010; Sun & Anderson, 2012; Van Wart, 2013b). Leaders are judged by their contributions to building successful communities, engaging mutual learning, and driving cooperative problem solving (Van Wart, 2013b). Collaborative leaders have access to resources and a strategy to use incentives to induce others into action (Page, 2010). They often come to the planning table with a bank of social capital and a willingness to share power to achieve objectives (Sun & Anderson, 2012). Sun and Anderson reported that integrative leaders manifest cognitive, social, and behavioral complexity, making them good barometers of social interaction. Positioned at the interface of their own organization and that of other collaboration members, integrative leaders are acutely aware of relational justice issues and are often called on to provide a voice for disadvantaged parties (Van Wart, 2013a).
Page (2010) provided a working model for integrative leadership that stresses leadership tactics, stakeholder interpretations, and collaborative results, as illustrated by Figure 6.

![Figure 6. A framework for analyzing collaborative governance (Page, 2010).](image)

From a review of collaborative leadership literature, Page (2010) offered three broad tactics for leading initiatives: (a) framing the agenda, (b) convening stakeholders, and (c) structuring deliberations. As Rittel and Webber (1973) suggested, creating a common understanding of a problem is the first step in identifying a solution. Framing the issue, according to Page (2010), involves “selecting a part of a complex situation and heightening its salience . . . [to make it] worthy of intervention or joint problem solving” (p. 248). Research from both political science and sociology has confirmed the importance of framing agendas to build coalitions and influence policy (Benford & Snow, 2000; D. Stone, 1989).

Bringing the right group of actors to the planning table is crucial to the success of the collaboration (Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Crosby & Bryson, 2005a, 2005b). Because members
bring different levels of power, often in the form of resources, the mix of actors at the table, the agenda they discuss, and the way deliberations are structured greatly impact success (Page, 2010). David Wile (2014b) recommended creating clever interactions between people in a shared space, resulting in shared experience that can break down barriers.

Collaborative leaders must attend to the perceived legitimacy of the process, because stakeholder impressions of transparency and fairness impact their willingness to participate in the process (Page, 2010). Leaders are often called on to provide a voice for disenfranchised populations, because the power elite might easily manipulate the process to achieve their own ends (Van Wart, 2013a). When stakeholders’ perceptions are well managed, and the collaborative process is deemed legitimate, the resulting work product is likely to be granted a level of political support (Page, 2010; Wallner, 2008). Process legitimacy and political support, in turn, increase the probability that collaborative effort will result in successful execution. A virtuous cycle begins, resulting in an increase in civic capacity.

Although regimes are often messy and frustrating, Giloth (2004) noted that communities that enact a progressive policy regime are best suited to provide for the needs of the most vulnerable second-chance citizens. In the public sector, leadership takes on an additional role as the arbiter of democratic principles—ensuring that neither laissez-faire nor authoritarian leadership dominates at the table. For “laissez-faire leadership [leads] to cynicism and authoritarian leadership [leads] to obedience or infighting, while democratic leadership [leads] to tolerance, less selfishness, and more conscientious behavior” (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013, p. 9).
The Criticality of Collaboration

Underlying both regime theory and the theory of integrative leadership is the concept of collaboration. At the institutional level of analysis, collaboration is either facilitated or inhibited by institutional design. The clarity of ground rules, the transparency of the process, and establishing an open yet exclusive forum for public discourse are factors associated with successful collaborative governance outcomes (Ansell & Gash, 2007). Exclusivity of the forum keeps members at the planning table and helps to prevent more powerful members from walking away, or finding relief from other sources such as the judicial system—leaving the less powerful members of the coalition in a perpetually vulnerable position (Ansell & Gash, 2007; Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Giloth, 2004; Page, 2010; C. Stone, 2005).

From the leadership perspective, the ability to create collaborative space and forge a compelling, shared vision of the problem and the solution enhances the probability of a successful engagement. The leadership challenges in cross-sector, intergovernmental collaborations are delicate and persistent. Overcoming a history of antagonism, broken promises, and mismanagement requires patience, positive behavior modeling, and occasionally a heavy hand.

In this complex political space, leaders need contingent strategies to adapt to the changing landscape. Noted political scholar James McGregor Burns (as cited in Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013) described President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, one of the most impactful executives of the 20th century, as a character straight from the pages of Machiavelli:

He was a manipulator, and at the same time he had to be a lion. To what extent did he use the tactics of a fox in order to advance the wishes of a lion? To what extent did he have to be a transactional leader to be able to become a transforming leader? (p. 6)
Leading in a complex, interdependent environment requires leaders to be chameleons, to change their “spots”—as Woodrow Wilson would describe it (Kettl, 2009)—as circumstances require, all the while being comfortable on what some might consider morally ambiguous ground.

**Summary of Themes With Reviewed Literature**

Common themes permeate the literature of collaborative governance and integrative leadership in complex public, private, and nonprofit coalitions. The more the world globalizes economic interests, the more we need to transform our political and organizational structures to meet new challenges (Crosby & Bryson, 2005a; Van Wart, 2013a). Organizations are no longer considered rigid structures with hierarchical chains of command but blurred lines of fluid, flexible, and dynamic interacting actors whose interests merge to form governing regimes (Schneider & Somers, 2006; C. Stone, 2005).

Public institutions designed with clear jurisdictional borders to prevent amassing power and running roughshod over individual rights must now deal pragmatically by sharing power with a multitude of stakeholders, including private citizens. In this new landscape, governing bodies must be less concerned with *rowing* the proverbial boat and more concerned with the complex task of *steering* the boat by making policy through collaborative governance (Goldsmith & Eggers, 2004).

To suggest that leading in this environment is easy would be foolish; to say it is challenging is, at best, an understatement. Leadership and political theories have evolved and adapted to address the new global reality. The concept of collaboration, as a structural component of institutions and a competency of effective leadership, provides a critical
conduit between the environment, in which the leader leads, and the inner world of the leader’s emotions, values, cognition, and actions.

The WFD context stands in the crosshairs of global economic reality and administrative bureaucracy. An astounding 47 federal agencies (GAO, 2011) provide funding to states for the benefit of citizens in need, and states in turn are willing to share power with local authorities to provide for American citizens. Federal laws like the WIA and WIOA mandate complex collaborations within the WFD system and have established joint public, private, and nonprofit WIBs to see that the public good is addressed.

The importance of leadership to the success of any endeavor is a fait accompli in organizational literature (Page, 2010). Leaders influence the focus of participants and manage the collective processes to ensure the legitimacy of the collaborative efforts. Balancing power, speaking for those who are unable to speak for themselves, and generating form from the chaos of spontaneous stakeholder interactions to catalyze progress are just a few of the roles that leaders play (Schneider & Somers, 2006). WIB leaders must steer the boat, all the while providing a rhythmic beat of the drum to those who are rowing, measuring progress in what may seem to be a “wicked” storm of global and local economic and political realities.

Lest one despair that the challenges are too much to bear, Sun and Anderson (2012) offered an example of positive deviancy to inspire those engaged in helping vulnerable populations:

At the conclusion of the 2nd World War, reaching consensus . . . [on] the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [was challenging]. The obvious problem was the enormous variety of acknowledged needs—social, cultural, legal, political. Could even the most skillful leadership knit together a declaration that responded to them all? . . . Almost miraculously, such leadership appeared in the American
representative to the Human Rights Commission, an elderly, plainly dressed woman who often came to the sessions in New York by subway. (p. 314)

The unlikely navigator of the hotly contested declaration was Eleanor Roosevelt. With the dexterity of a great ballroom dancer, Mrs. Roosevelt managed numerous emotional debates with the Russian delegates, standing squarely on her own position while remaining conciliatory to the Soviet position, announcing in the end that “no personal liberty would exist without economic security and independence. Men in need [are] not free men” (p. 314).

Leading in complex initiatives in pursuit of solutions to wicked problems is achievable. Understanding how this is done and what motivates leaders to fight long, arduous battles remain topics for scholarly inquiry.

**Chapter Summary**

Chapter 2 reviewed the literature and theory related to collaborative governance, especially in the context of regime theory and collaborative leadership theory. The literature describes how the leader and his or her environment are intertwined, with collaboration as a common thread running through the fabric of the leadership space. In the WFD context, collaborations are federally mandated, raising the priority of effective collaborations to achieve public value.

In Chapter 3, I describe the research design and methodology employed to answer my research questions about leadership of state-level WIBs. Reviewed in detail are the participant selection, data collection, and data storage processes as well as the techniques applied in analyzing the data.
Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter presents the research methodology selected for this qualitative study. In the first section, I review qualitative cross-case study design and the rationale for employing this approach. In the next section, I highlight design elements incorporated for reliability and trustworthiness of the research approach. Participant selection criteria and enrollment procedures are captured in the third section. The fourth section summarizes the data collection process, followed immediately by the data analysis methodology. Ethical considerations are captured in the next section. The following section includes a discussion about the limitations of the study. The last section describes the role of the researcher and provides a subjectivity statement.

Rationale for Qualitative Cross-Case Study Design

Qualitative inquiry is fundamental to generating new knowledge in a variety of social sciences (Chan, 2006; Green, 2000). It is an activity that situates the researcher in the natural setting of the study and provides a set of interpretive practices that give visibility and meaning to events (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). According to Merriam (1998), case study research attempts to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context. Qualitative research involves collecting and analyzing numerous empirical materials, including personal narratives, interviews, historical texts, visual artifacts, and other items that describe moments and meanings in the lives of the individuals studied.

Creswell (1998) described a case study as “an exploration of a ‘bounded system’ or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth collection involving multiple sources of information in rich context” (p. 61). The bounded system may be a program, activity, event, group of people, or individual.
The selection of research strategies, tools, and methods should be based on the nature of the research questions and the assumptions the researcher is willing to accept at the onset of the investigation (Howe, 1988). In addition, Yin (2014) suggested that the researcher consider the control he or she is likely to have over actual behaviors as well as if the focus is on contemporary or historical events. New leadership theories, such as integrative leadership, are fraught with values, emotions, and aspirations—all concepts more easily addressed using qualitative methods (Crosby & Bryson, 2005a, 2010; Schneider & Somers, 2006; Van Wart, 2013a). Likewise, Ansell and Gash (2007) reported that the bulk of scholarly literature on collaborative governance is based on case studies, with a focus on a single sector.

Ragin (1999) cautioned that single-case studies are unlikely to uncover exact antecedent matches; therefore cross-case studies may be more instructive using a more thematic typology to reveal meaning from multiple data streams:

Sometimes a research literature is especially well developed, and the selection of cases, specifications of outcomes, and identification of causally relevant conditions are unproblematic. In other situations, however, the researcher can formulate a worthwhile selection of cases, outcomes, and causal conditions only through an in-depth analysis of cases. Sometimes it is necessary to constitute relevant cases and their key aspects through a systematic dialog of ideas and evidence. (p. 1230)

Yin (2014) suggested that case study is often the method of choice for inquiries that evaluate publicly supported programs, such as those promulgated by federal, state, or local governments. The complexity of causality in public interventions for wicked problems is inherently nonlinear and therefore does not lend itself to quantitative analysis, such as regression; hence qualitative methods are more appropriate (Achen, 2005; Young, 2012). In fact, Achen (2005) suggested that statistical methods cannot cope with much of social reality.
“How” and “why” questions generally lend themselves to case study design (Yin, 2014). Additionally, case study design is uniquely suited to dealing with a variety of data sources, including documents, interviews, artifacts, and observations—which provides advantages over a conventional historical study. Multiple sources of information are used to triangulate the data to improve reliability, validity, and trustworthiness (Creswell, 2013).

Lee and Chavis (2012) recommended cross-case study as a robust methodology for studies of community and systems change and when the research process cannot manipulate participant behavior (Yin, 2014). Shinn (2007) explained that “academic research is inaccessible: hard to get and hard to read” (p. 217) for most busy public leaders. Academic literature can be difficult to grasp because of complex conceptualizations and conflicting language (Van Wart, 2013b). Although officials greatly desire to incorporate social science research into political praxis, the esoteric nature of scholarly literature creates a barrier to practical application.

After more than 20 years of advocacy working with homeless individuals in New York City, distinguished anthropologist Kim Hopper (as quoted in Shinn, 2007) offered an interesting analogy about transferring knowledge from the academic to public consciousness:

Working within existing bureaucracies of assistance is like waltzing with a monster: the footwork can be tricky; there’s no doubt about who’s leading whom and all the while one part of you is trying to work out who’s calling the tune. (p. 216)

Researchers wishing to impact public policy must be willing to “waltz with the monster,” sharing data and research findings in ways that are impactful and accessible, all while understanding the risk inherent to the process.

Lee and Chavis (2012) conjectured that cross-case methodology translates effectively to nonresearchers and program evaluators by the artful sharing of narrative combined with
qualitative and quantitative data that tell a compelling story. Multiple theories of adult learning support Lee and Chavis’s claim that cross-case studies are well suited as instructional devices. In the cognitive theory of meaningful learning, Ausubel, Novak, and Hanesian (1978) theorized that people learn by developing cross-connections between related topics, allowing them to make inferences and apply analytic reasoning. This process closely approximates the process employed during the data analysis phase of a cross-case study (Khan & VanWynsberghe, 2008).

Kolodner (1993) expanded the cognitive learning theory of Ausubel and colleagues (1978) by suggesting that individuals interpret a novel situation in terms of its relevance to a previously processed case. Through this cognitive process, the learner affixes a code, or index, to the information during the transfer to long-term memory. The more astute a learner is in conceptualizing situations, the more likely it is that he or she will find and use relevant knowledge stored in long-term memory.

The work on skill development by Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) described the acquisition of expertise as needing an intimate knowledge of concrete cases prerequisite for true expertise. Experts think holistically, visually, and intuitively, often with great speed and little conscious effort (Flyvbjerg, 2001). “Case studies are the domain of expertise, which is neither guesswork nor a conscious analytical division of situations into parts and rules but rather, the recognition, interpretation and discrimination of cases and new situations” (Khan & VanWynsberghe, 2008, “Learning From and With Cases,” para. 5).

The usefulness of cross-case study as an interpretive tool for public officials to learn from social science, and other environmental trends of the past half-century, inspired researchers to expand beyond the bounds of positivist epistemology and ontology. As the
world becomes “flatter” (Friedman, 2005), technology accelerates the pace of change, and globalization blurs national borders, we find ourselves in an increasingly complex world (Wheatley, 2006). The notion of the organization itself has shifted “from a bureaucracy with clear boundaries and internal areas of authority, to a new form, which has fluid and flexible external and internal boundaries” (Ilinitch, D’Aveni, & Lewin, as quoted in Schneider & Somers, 2006, p. 351).

The complexity of leadership in the public environment necessitates a shift in research methodologies from deterministic experimentation and regression, with their illusion of control, toward a broader array of methodologies, including naturalistic approaches, such as comparative case study (Schneider & Somers, 2006). Few public leaders have the luxury of catering to only one constituency or one cause—complex and competing interests are the bedrock of the democratic landscape.

Many scholars agreed with Schneider and Somers’s perspective (Herriott & Firestone, 1983; Parlett & Hamilton, 1976; Stake, 2006) suggesting that the synthesis of multiple cases into one study has wide application in public policy research as well as lending itself to the generalization of complex program descriptions (Stake, 2006). Paradoxically, the simultaneous evaluations of multiple-case studies are often so complex that they are best performed by a single researcher (Stake, 2006): “It is very difficult to transfer to others a full picture of what both researchers and data sources [e.g., interviewees] know of experience, interactivity, and context” (p. 18).

From a practical and philosophical perspective, Stake (2006) suggested that multiple-case study is well suited for dissertation research. While the doctoral candidate acts as the
research director, data collector, and data analyst for the study, the dissertation advisor and committee provide expert insight into the design and findings of the research project.

**Design Trustworthiness**

Guba and Lincoln (as cited in J. Smith & Heshusius, 1986) were among the first scholars to advocate for a system of rigor to be applied in naturalistic studies. The extensive and detailed criteria they established essentially created a parallel referent with acceptance criteria from quantitative literature. Using the term *trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiry*, they established the following crosswalk between paradigms:

- *Credibility* compares to internal validity.
- *Dependability* aligns with reliability.
- *Confirmability* mirrors objectivity.
- *Applicability* is reminiscent of transferability, or external validity.

Throughout the study, a number of methodological devices were used to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings. The design included three of four triangulation methods prescribed by Denzin (as cited in Janesick, 2000; Yin, 2014) for enriching qualitative design: (a) variety of data sources, (b) multiple theoretical lenses, and (c) a variety of methods to collect and interpret data. In keeping with Janesick’s (2000) conceptualization of qualitative research as a *choreographic* enterprise, this research approach remained open to modification during the course of the inquiry.

Data were collected from different perspectives (e.g., public documents, confidential interviews) using various collection methods (e.g., interviews, survey instruments, document and artifact reviews) and analyzed using a variety of techniques (e.g., inductive and deductive thematic coding, review of survey data). Data analysis was conducted using two
different theoretical lenses: (a) at the individual level by integrated leadership theory and (b) at the organizational level using regime theory. To ensure the accuracy of interview transcripts, participants reviewed and annotated interview transcripts. To mitigate the risk of shifting meaning or losing touch with participants during the course of the study, interviews were transcribed promptly following the interview process and electronically provided to the participant as a member check (Lincoln & Guba, as cited by Janesick, 2000; Stake, 2006).

**Participant Selection and Recruitment**

In the new global economy, employers increasingly require workers to have training and education beyond a high school diploma. Vocational training and postsecondary education lead to substantial earnings increases (Aliprantis & Jacobson, 2012; McLendon & Perna, 2014). Under the federal WIA, states provided an array of employment and job training services through local one-stop centers.

One-stops offered three types of support services: core, intensive, and training (refer to Figure 1). Core services, such as job search and career counseling, were available to all adults. If an individual could not find a job through core services, he or she could access intensive services, which included more comprehensive assessments and individual training plans. Training services, such as occupational skills and job readiness training directly linked to job opportunities in the local community, were usually limited to those who had not been successful with intensive services. The cost to deliver training services was greater than it was to deliver intensive or core services; therefore, many states limited access to training services despite findings that training and education provided the most effective means for securing and maintaining a livable wage (Aliprantis & Jacobson, 2012; McLendon & Perna, 2014; Shaw et al., 2006; Van Opstal, 2001).
WIA gave state WIBs broad discretion in directing funding to core, intensive, or training services and in establishing the eligibility requirements to move through the sequence of services. States could prioritize training services in funding allocations and make it easy for individuals to move quickly through the sequence of services, or they may use the sequential eligibility in the regulation as a means of restricting access to the most vulnerable populations (Shaw et al., 2006).

The CFED, a national nonprofit organization, tracked and published the rate at which citizens from each state were provided training services under WIA legislation. Nationally, the median percentage of WIA participants, known as “exiters,” who received training service was 59% (Corporation for Enterprise Development [CFED], 2014). States that offered more expensive and impactful training services at rates less than the national average of 59% were eliminated from the sample frame for this study.

WFD provides a “second chance” for American citizens to achieve financial independence through acquiring quality jobs (Giloth, 2004). The “first-chance” system of public early childhood, primary, secondary, and postsecondary education is our nation’s first line of defense against poverty and economic instability. State investments in public education are another key metric tracked and analyzed by the CFED’s Assets and Opportunity Scorecard database (CFED, 2014). CFED awarded states that invested in public education and achieved positive educational outcomes that met the demands of the changing global economy were awarded a letter grade of A or B.

In pursuit of understanding the “whole,” Stake (2006) recommended that researchers select cases that are atypical—that is, cases that veer from the norm, illustrating the attributes of interest. Marsh and colleagues (2004) echoed Stake’s (2006) assertions, suggesting that
the fastest and most cost-effective way to implement improvement in a system is to identify *positive deviants,* or those individuals from a community who experience more desirable outcomes than their peers. The behaviors that provide them a competitive edge are most likely accessible, culturally acceptable, and sustainable because they already exist in the community setting (Marsh et al., 2004).

The identification and adoption of exemplary behavior is the basic tenet of human performance technology (HPI). Similar to the *positive deviant* Marsh and colleagues described, Wile (2014a, 2014b, 2014c), in his series of articles titled “Why Doers Do,” translated Marsh and colleagues’ concept for the work environment through the HPI model. By interviewing and observing the top 1%–3% of workers in a particular field, performance consultants isolate the behaviors that set this group apart. Sharing these behaviors with others can shift the mean, which often equates to considerable increases in productivity. According to Wile (2014b), a pragmatic approach to improving performance eliminates wasted time looking for what is missing from poor performers and focuses time and attention on isolating lessons of success from superior performers.

Consistent with the *positive deviant* philosophy, this study focused on the leadership of WFD from states with a legacy of progressive training implementation under WIA. Because WIA language was somewhat ambiguous, some states chose enhanced training service provisioning and to allocate state funding for public education.

That being said, I defined progressive states as those with workforce implementation bias greater than the average 59% “exiters” with training outcomes and a letter grade of A or B for public education policy and outcomes as reported by the CFED’s (2014) Assets and Opportunities Scorecard. By this definition, 14 of the 50 (28%) U.S. states were eligible for
consideration in this study. Table 5 provides the participant pool based on these progressive performance criteria.

Table 5

*Progressive State Workforce Investment Boards*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Percentage exiters with training</th>
<th>Education grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>79.1</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>61.2</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>87.4</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>59.4</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>80.8</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>61.1</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>85.5</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>75.1</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>66.8</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>84.3</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>62.3</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>59.1</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>63.3</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>85.3</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The logic that guided the design assumed that cases sharing similar progressive WFD outcomes also share one or more leadership and regime attributes. The combination of shared attributes creates an environment, both at the personal and organization levels, that facilitates successful policy development and implementation for “second-chance” citizenry.
State WIB chairs from eligible states were contacted concerning the nature and intent of the study using the contact information published by Employment and Training Reporter’s (2014) *Workforce Development System Directory*. This registry of WFD professionals at the state and local levels is released periodically.

Whenever possible, potential participants were contacted by telephone (Appendix A). Alternatively, initial contact was made via e-mail or through professional social media sites, such as LinkedIn, if telephone contact information was not available (Appendix B). In addition to the primary contact, potential participants received an introductory letter confirming their interest in participation (Appendix C), along with a copy of an informed consent form for their review and signature (Appendix D). Examples of all recruitment materials for this study are supplied in the referenced appendices.

The goal of qualitative research is to study “a relatively small number of special cases that are successful at saying something and therefore a good source of lessons learned” (Patton, 2002, p. 7). Of primary importance is the quality of participant responses rather than the quantity. Ragin (1999) suggested that the number of cases remain small enough to ensure that the researcher remains familiar with the details of each case but large enough to facilitate compelling cross-case patterns. According to Stake (2006), research studies involving multiple cases are most effective when 4–15 cases are enrolled.

Yin (2014) suggested that the number of cases be determined based on subtlety of the undergirding theory or theories that inform the study. If the theory is relatively straightforward and the need for certainty is low, two or three cases may be sufficient to achieve the research goal. Conversely, if the need for certainty is high, as would be the case for expensive public policy decisions, Yin (2014) recommended between 5 and 10
replications. Marsh et al. (2004) recommended four to six cases be studied to reveal essential behaviors associated with the success of the positive deviant population.

This study was designed to enroll between five and eight individual state WIB chairs. The minimum number of five provides diversity and a rich, thick set of data for analysis. Diversity was an important factor in a study of WFD, because local economic conditions vary throughout the nation. Participants from different regions of the country were included in the interview pool to provide an additional level of diversity in the data collected. The design called for a maximum of eight participants, which helped maintain the anonymity of the participants. Any sensitive commentary made by interviewees cannot be definitively traced to any particular state or individual.

Given the small size of the participant pool and the dual role that these individuals play in both their private-sector and WIB volunteer positions, a contingency plan was devised to guard against under- or overenrollment. Figure 7 illustrates the enrollment and contingency steps planned for the enrollment process.

**Data Collection Methods**

Collaboration undergirds both integrated leadership and regime theory. For the leader, building and sustaining successful collaborations requires a set of interpersonal and technical skills that manifest through a variety of leadership tactics (Crosby & Bryson, 2010; Page, 2010; Sun & Anderson, 2012; Van Wart, 2013b). From the perspective of regime theory, sustainable collaborations among various stakeholders provide the sustainable “glue” that allows regimes to extend beyond the critical electoral cycle (Ansell & Gash, 2007; Crosby & Bryson, 2005a; Isaac, 2013; Nieman, 2007; C. Stone, 2005; Young, 2012). Collaboration, therefore, is the common denominator that binds the leader within the political framework.
Figure 7. Participant selection and recruitment process design.
**Participant interviews.** The primary data source for this cross-case study was the in-depth interview conducted with study enrollees (Appendix E). Yin (2014) stated that interviews are commonly found in case study research and are frequently designed as a fluid, somewhat informal, unstructured conversation with the interviewee that may occur in one or multiple sessions. Rubin and Rubin (2012) suggested that researchers remain open to new lines of inquiry throughout the interview process, while simultaneously ensuring a level of fidelity to prime interview questions. This type of process is commonly referred to as a *semistructured interview*.

The purpose of the interview process was to collect data that provided a better understanding of the knowledge and experiences of state-level WIB chairs, especially as applied to collaboration. Because each individual board chair represents a unique case, from a different state, each with its own complex political and economic context, interviews provided a rich source of data from a multitude of perspectives. As Merriam (1998) shared, interviews are often the only way to find out what is in and on someone else’s mind.

I conducted a pilot study with one of the North Carolina state WIB chairs with whom I have served over the past 13 years, as a formative evaluation and training activity. As noted in Table 5, North Carolina was not eligible to participate in the study. This exclusion was based on the grade it received from CFED (2014) for the K–12 public education program. Nonetheless, the volunteer North Carolina board chair engaged in a pilot of the survey and interview processes, providing valuable feedback for improving the focus of questions and transparency of the data collection and member check processes (Stake, 2006).

**Screening questionnaire.** The “Working Together: A Profile of Collaboration” questionnaire is a validated instrument designed to measure collaboration effectiveness
(Chrislip & Larson, 1994; OMNI Institute, 1992). A copy of the instrument is included in Appendix F. The instrument provided insight into the collaboration process and was used in this study as means for providing “complementary data on the same topic” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 62). The survey was designed to measure key elements relevant to the success of a collaboration, including (a) the context, (b) the structure, (c) collaboration members, (d) processes employed by the collaboration, and, lastly, (e) collaboration results. This questionnaire had been used successfully for studies in the local WFD context (Koehn, 2010).

The questionnaire was electronically administered to participants in conjunction with the interview and analyzed after the interview transcript was reviewed. The purpose of including these data was to obviate leaders’ propensity for collaborative exchange and to provide a baseline for comparison during the data analysis phase of the study. Although this instrument is a quantitative tool, it plays only a supporting role for the more substantive narrative the interview process provides. Additionally, this tool provides only information pursuant to collaboration, albeit an important, but not exclusive element of the theoretical framework that informed this study.

**Document and artifact review.** In addition to participant interviews and screening questionnaires, artifacts and documents from each state-level WIB were collected and included in the analysis. Sources included published meeting agendas and minutes, published reports, and other information posted on WIB Web sites. Of particular interest were the accessibility and quality of state WIB mission and vision statements. Schneider and Somers (2006) asserted that the identity an organization projects is linked to its ability to adapt:
Increasingly, an organization must reside in the heads and hearts of its members. Thus, in the absence of an externalized bureaucratic structure, it becomes more important to have an internalized cognitive structure of what the organization stands for and where it intends to go—in short, a clear sense of the organization’s identity. A sense of identity serves as a rudder for navigating difficult waters. (Albert, Ashforth, & Dutton, as quoted in Schneider & Somers, 2006, p. 357)

**Field observations.** Naturalistic studies are designed to take place in real-world settings and are often amenable to direct observation (Yin, 2014). Although field observations are a common, desirable, rich source of complementary data, this study did not support this data collection methodology. This study was an unfunded dissertation with a participant pool that was dispersed across the continental United States; therefore the cost to travel to each venue was prohibitive. In addition, state WIB meetings are held infrequently, usually on a quarterly basis, and as such the logistics of managing multiple site visits to conduct interviews and field observations were unmanageable.

**Timing.** This study was conducted during the first quarter of 2017, the first calendar year when the requirements of WIOA became fully effective. According to Shinn (2007), providing scholarly insight to inform public policy has a unique and often short-lived window of opportunity: “In order to have an influence, research has to be available when policymakers need it. Sophisticated studies that become available only after decision makers are committed to a course of action have little influence” (p. 221).

The passing of WIOA in June 2014 opened a period of agency interpretation of the operational shifts that are needed to transition from WIA to WIOA. Key assertions from this study will be most helpful to state WIB leaders in the coming years, when they are challenged to transform state programs to meet the training demands embedded within the
new law. That said, the extraction and sharing of knowledge from WFD’s positive deviants was warranted given the legislative environment.

**Data Handling and Storage**

Interviews were recorded using an iPhone or a digital recording device. In addition, interviews were also recorded using a digital Flip Video camera to provide contingency copies of all conversations. Original electronic files were transferred from collection devices within 24 hours of the interview session and stored in two separate locations, including a personal computer hard drive and a backup external hard drive. All original electronic files were password protected at the time of transfer.

The researcher prepared interview transcripts following each session and prior to engaging in additional interviews. The researcher elected to complete the transcriptions personally to remain “close to the data” (Gilbert, Jackson & di Gregorio, 2014, p. 223). Each enrollee was provided with a pseudonym (e.g., the date of the interview), and all references to persons, places, or incidents that could lead to the identity of the participant were similarly redacted to prevent inadvertent disclosure to third parties.

The qualitative data collected provided “thick” descriptions that were further processed to uncover underlying themes during the analysis process (J. Smith & Heshusius, 1986). To confirm the accuracy of interview transcripts, participants reviewed the text prepared following the recording session. After securing transcript approval from participants, the researcher uploaded individual transcript MS Word files into QSR International’s NVivo for Mac–2014 software system for further processing. Like original raw recordings, NVivo files were password protected to limit the risk of exposing participant
identities. Files were stored in two parallel locations to mitigate against the loss of data resulting from potential technology failures.

**Data Analysis Process**

Qualitative data collected for this study included a range of sources, including interviews, audio and video recordings, public documents and reports, and Web site contents (Yin, 2014). Multiple sources of information were used to improve the trustworthiness of the findings (Creswell, 2013). The semistructured nature of the interviews allowed for flexibility to adapt in real time as findings emerged in the field setting.

Transcript data were processed using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS; Gilbert et al., 2014; Silver & Lewins, 2014). The use of NVivo software facilitated efficiency in data coding and retrieval processes (Bazeley, 2010; Silver & Lewins, 2014; Yuen & Richards, 1994). Specifically, the CAQDAS software was used to support the following functions (Gilbert et al., 2014): (a) organize the data into thematic nodes, (b) explore data by themes, (c) annotate researcher reflections on coded data, (d) integrate data across cases, and (e) visualize connections among and between cases.

During the first phase of the concurrent data analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007), narratives were coded, either as themes that emerged directly from the text or from predetermined classifications identified in the literature (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Saldaña, 2013). Codes derived from integrated leadership and regime theories served as a source of “enriched dialogue of theory and evidence” (Ragin, 1999, p. 1236). The traceability matrix in Appendix G illustrates codes derived from regime and integrative leadership theory literature. This crosswalk tool reveals the high-level linkage between my research questions, questionnaire items, and coding themes from both the
leadership and political regime theory perspectives (Camou, 2014; Morse, 2010; Silvia & McGuire, 2010).

The analysis process was executed in a sequential fashion, whereby each data source (e.g., transcript, artifact, survey result) was performed separately (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Each case was addressed independently, followed by a synthesis of data from across the entire study spectrum (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014). The data were analyzed for similarities, differences, and convergence of sector themes, as recommended by Van Wart (2013a).

Qualitative data collected from other sources, such as documents and artifacts, were also coded and grouped into concepts and themes. Quantitative data from the screening questionnaire were entered into an Excel spreadsheet and checked for accuracy. Excel software was used to calculate descriptive statistics of the responses within the following five collaboration categories: (a) context, (b) structure, (c) membership, (d) processes, and (e) outcomes. Guidelines for the analysis of the “Working Together” survey were provided by the OMNI Institute. A copy of the guideline is provided in Appendix H.

Themes and results from each data set were merged into a triangulation design for additional comparison during the second phase of the analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Figure 8 provides an illustration of the concurrent triangulation analysis process used to synthesize the data from the study. This analytical design was considered concurrent because each type of data was analyzed at the same time, but through separate analytical processes (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).
Figure 8. Concurrent data analysis process. Each data stream was analyzed separately then compared and contrasted to other data streams from the case. Each case was analyzed separately. Themes were synthesized into the final cross-case findings.

Consistent with Stake (2006) and Yin (2014), sequential analysis of individual case results was compared and contrasted across the entire multicase data set. Themes that emerged from individual case analysis were clustered into a pattern that was validated by constant comparison across all cases in the cross-case analysis. Lee and Chavis (2012) suggested that contradictions in the data may indicate that rival explanations exist for observed outcomes. Each case study, therefore, provided evidence that either supported or disputed the logic underlying the study.

The product of a cross-case analysis has been described as a “general lesson” (Creswell, 2013), “assertion” (Stake, 2006), “explanation,” or “pattern” (Yin, 2014). Despite the variation in nomenclature, the findings of case study research represent the meaning or essential judgments of the researcher. As the data collection and analysis instrument, I must reflect on the process at all times to determine sources of bias. To ensure that I remained aware of my positionality throughout the process, I kept a research journal that was used as
an additional reference to complement the data obtained throughout the collection and analysis cycles.

**Ethical Considerations**

Protecting study participants from repercussions as a result of the open, candid discussion of WFD systems was the fiduciary duty of the researcher. As Shinn (2007) suggested, “neither politicians nor their appointees have tenure” (p. 227), and as such, they may not wish to be associated with findings that highlighted deficiencies in WFD structure or systems. The researcher must ensure, through strict adherence to study procedures, that the confidentiality of the respondent was maintained through the life cycle of the study. As Shinn (2007) also noted, public leaders are much less concerned with negative findings published in esoteric academic journals because these publications lag well behind the news cycle and are not commonly within the literary domain of the electorate.

Specifically, the researcher and the respondent mutually agreed on the setting for the interview. At no time were individuals interviewed in the presence of any member of their WIB, government officials, members of supporting staff, or others with the authority to impact the individuals’ appointments to the WIB, or otherwise influenced by their commentary. Likewise, interviewees were protected, to the extent possible, from coercion or other inhibition so that they were free to articulate their responses without concern for personal or professional harm.

Interviewees were given the transcript of their session with the express purpose of reviewing and editing responses. During the transcription process, individual references to the interviewee’s identity and to their state affiliation were replaced with blinded subject codes. All copies of original data will be destroyed in a controlled fashion in accordance with
North Carolina State University’s document destruction policy at the conclusion of the research study.

No physical harm or discomfort was experienced by participants as a result of this study. That said, the research protocol included instructions for appropriate emergency response personnel per normal procedures customary to the interview location as a contingency measure.

Limitations of the Study

This study sought to explore the way that state-level WIB chairs from progressive states understand their role in the complex WFD environment. The study was primarily a contextualization and depiction of the enrollee’s perceptions; this impacts the accuracy of results. The study did not intend to measure specific variables that impact collaborative skills or processes but rather to use collaboration as a common element that impacted both the individual and organizational levels of analysis provided by the theoretical frameworks of integrated leadership and regime theory.

Federal regulations governing WIB activities present challenges and opportunities to service America’s most vulnerable populations. Using the concept of positive deviance that Marsh and colleagues (2004) promoted, this study focused only on states that demonstrated a long-term commitment to WFD by investing in K–12 public education as well as having a history of privileging training solutions over less aggressive interventions for state citizens, even when not compelled to do so by WIA. These two factors do not work in isolation, and as Bates and Redmann (2002) reported, manipulation of performance metrics may have distorted the state rankings reported by the Assets and Opportunity Scorecard (CFED, 2014). States that were not selected for study may also exhibit similar themes as the selected key
performer states; however, those trends would not be detected using the positive deviance process.

Unlike other studies in the WFD context, this study was designed to understand WIB chair perceptions at the state leadership level. Any assumption that the findings herein are transferable to a local WIB may be suspect. Board member appointments at the local level may not be made in the same way, nor should it be assumed that local WIBs are presented with the same challenges at those operating at the state level.

Time and resource allocation placed constraints on the design of the study and may also have impacted the study findings. While the use of robust study design was included to mitigate the impact of these practical constraints, it was unlikely that every possible finding would be revealed through this endeavor. Nonetheless, this study does represent a novel approach to understanding the complex, multidimensional challenges facing leaders of state WIBs and has uncovered lessons that can be shared in a timely fashion with others similarly positioned across the nation.

**Role of the Researcher and Subjectivity**

For the past 13 years, I have had the privilege of working on successful collaborations between industry, public higher education, and public policy makers that have positioned North Carolina as a leader in the biotechnology and pharmaceutical training field.

This experience introduced me to the world of WFD policy and indirectly led to my appointment to the North Carolina Commission on Workforce Development, now branded as the NCWorks Commission, in 2005. Since joining the commission, I have participated in a variety of different subcommittees, including those responsible for creating the commission’s strategic plan, standardizing local WIB capacity, measuring the level of customer satisfaction
with the services provided at one-stop centers throughout the state, and developing
performance criteria for service centers and in formulating the memorandum of
understanding between various stakeholders that support brick-and-mortar NCWorks centers.

Most recently, I have been assigned to lead an effort to expand outreach and
engagement of the business community. During my tenure, I have worked with four
commission chairs, observing them as they navigated through unchartered leadership
challenges, in what I can only infer differs greatly from their roles in private industry.

In 2008, I returned to graduate school to further my education and to grow, both
personally and professionally. I was not immune to the economic downturn of the Great
Recession, having been laid off twice since 2009. Unlike many other North Carolinians, I
have been very fortunate that I have not endured extended periods of unemployment and the
financial and emotional burdens that follow a seismic shift in employment status. I have been
privy to both the political landscape WFD policy and the reality of what the system has to
offer as a recipient of unemployment insurance benefits.

This personal connection to the fate of workers in our state, and throughout our
nation, has ignited a desire to help make the system more accessible, robust, and rewarding
for all parties involved. Having seen firsthand how this complex public, private, and not-for-
profit collaborative operates, I remain committed to building new knowledge about what
works best in WFD.

Finally, on the matter of clarifying my personal bias, as a member of the NCWorks
Commission, I have established relationships with policy makers and implementers in this
state. As such, I have formed opinions about the efficacy of North Carolina’s WFD system.
How this affiliation impacted my interpretation of qualitative data is not known; however, it
is reasonable to assume that my mental model of the national WFD system was influenced by my experiences.

Chapter Summary

In summary, the WFD context is a complex amalgam of public, private, and not-for-profit stakeholders bound together for the common good by means of federal WFD legislation. A unique window of opportunity exists to gain new knowledge about the perceptions of state-level leaders with experience interpreting and implementing programs that best support the needs of America’s most vulnerable “second-chance” citizens. Collecting, codifying, and sharing this knowledge in an accessible format for policy makers and other WFD professionals provides strategic importance as the country embraces WIOA rules.

In Chapter 1, I made the case that leadership matters—that one person, with the right skills, facilitating conditions that support an environment of collaboration, leading to stable coalitions, can and does make a difference. In Chapter 2, I provided the historical and theoretical arguments to support the value of studying WFD leadership from both individual and political perspectives. Chapter 3 provided a general overview of qualitative research approaches, and cross-case study analysis in particular, attesting that cross-case design was the appropriate scientific methodology to address my research questions in this dynamic political context.

Chapter 4 presents the study’s findings in the form of data generated and analyzed through the application of cross-case study methodology.
Chapter 4: Research Results

Scholarly literature tells us that individual leaders can and do make a difference in the trajectory and outcome of their prospective organizations (Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Fitzgerald, 2004; Flanagan, 2004; Giloth, 2004; Nelson, 1997; Shinn, 2007; S. R. Smith & Davis, 2004). Additionally, the WFD landscape is, by federal law (i.e., WIA and WIOA), foreign territory for state-level WFD board chairs appointed from the private sector. Navigating among the public, private, and nonprofit cultural venues of WFD requires skill and agility not necessarily acquired by leaders via their primary private-sector role. Furthermore, political theory tells us that it is the state that holds legitimate power and that any perceived power that lies at the local level is an illusion granted at the discretion of the state (Frug, 1999).

That being said, this study explored the leadership experience of state-level WIB chairs as individuals with the potential to impact WFD and the legitimate authority to do so. Built upon a foundation of integrative leadership and regime theory, the key premise of this study was that successful progressive state-level WIB chairs learn throughout their tenure, becoming more effective leaders in the complex WFD environment, and thereby create capacity to generate superior value for their citizens.

By continuously striving to listen to constituents’ voices and improve state structures, state-level WFD boards support America’s most vulnerable citizens during challenging times (Giloth, 2004; Shaw et al., 2006). The leadership style and operational strategies employed by the study participants provide valuable insights for the greater WFD leadership community.
To that end, a qualitative, cross-case comparison analysis was undertaken with progressive state-level board chairs, based largely on semistructured interviews. In addition, data analysis included archival documents from board proceedings and responses to a leadership style survey. This study endeavored to build upon empirical evidence linking collaborative effectiveness, integrative leadership theory, and the establishment of enduring political regimes as applied within the context of WFD. Anticipated to emerge from the data analysis was a holistic picture of collaborative leadership that included an expanded view of the elements that, owing to the nature of collaboration, determine and influence the way in which collaborative agendas are shaped and enacted.

Presented within this chapter are the results and analysis of the data collected from six state-level WIB chairs. This chapter contains four sections: (a) a brief review of the data collection and analysis process; (b) study findings organized by the four research questions, including detailed perceptions and experiences of the participants; (c) synthesis of the findings illustrating similarities and differences from undergirding theoretical perspectives; and, lastly, (d) conclusions and recommendations substantiated by the data.

**Data Collection and Processing**

This study began with the premise that states with a legacy of progressive interpretation of WFD implementation under WIA are well situated to succeed under the requirements of the newly enacted WIOA. Toward this end, a case study cross-case comparison research design was utilized, with the intent to obtain a holistic picture of leadership as portrayed by the experiences and perceptions of progressive state-level WIB chairs.
Using the Assets and Opportunity Scorecard published by the CFED (2014), a candidate pool of 14 states was identified using the following criteria: (a) history of providing worker training at a rate that was greater than average and (b) a firm commitment to K–12 education. For the purpose of this study, the commitment to both short-term (e.g., workforce training) and long-term (e.g., K–12 education) strategies characterized a progressive WFD posture.

The experience of six state-level WIB chairs with more than 1 year of experience in their position compose the findings herein. Volunteer interviewees were solicited from among the candidate pool represented in Table 5. According to case study methodologists Yin (2014), Lee and Chavis (2012), and Stake (2006), a minimum of five cases are recommended to provide sufficient rich, thick text from which one can derive trends and meaning.

To provide for the anonymity of participants, the design called for a maximum of eight individuals. Qualitative methodologists have published various means to protect the identity of study participants, including the use of aliases or pseudonyms (Creswell, 2009), or naming individuals as part of a longer list of participants but not attributing any particular statement or comment to an individual (Yin, 2014). Given the public nature of state-level WIB Chair assignments, and to provide the best protection, comments were annotated by interview session in the order received [e.g. Interview A, Interview B, etc.]. Additionally, demographic data typically used to describe study participants are absent to mitigate the risk of inadvertent identification of interviewees.

Semistructured interviews were conducted with participants over a 2-month period in early 2017. Interview recordings were transcribed and redacted personally by the researcher
to maintain intimacy with the data as well as provide additional security for participants.

Study participants reviewed transcripts for accuracy and meaning prior to data analysis. Data from participant transcripts, questionnaires, and state-level supporting documents were concurrently analyzed (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) using NVivo support software (Gilbert et al., 2014; Silver & Lewins, 2014).

**Findings**

Owing to the cross-case comparison nature of this data analysis, information was reviewed using a phased approach. First, interview transcripts were coded using themes derived from integrated leadership and regime theories. Second, using the dual practice of both inductive and deductive thematic analysis described by Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006), new codes emerged from the data. Lastly, and consistent with the methodology of Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), each data stream was reviewed independently before being synthesized into the summary findings.

Results were organized according to research question, with a corresponding analysis of the relationship between lived experiences and the undergirding leadership and political theories. A synthesis of the data explores the findings for the purpose of crafting conclusions and recommendations supported by the data supplied from incumbent state-level WIB chairs.

**Interview findings for Research Question 1.** How do state-level WIB chairs from progressive states understand their role and the responsibilities they have been given under federal workforce legislation?

The bifurcated role of a state-level WIB chair was described consistently by study participants with great alacrity. Along one track, participants described “formal responsibilities” (Interview B), “perfunctory duties” (Interview E), “basic functions”
Managerial tasks were quickly and easily codified by interviewees.

Juxtaposed with more mundane managerial activities were myriad responsibilities loosely described as leadership skills. Characterized as cheerleader (Interview A), coxswain (Interview B), educator (Interview A; Interview E; Interview F), spokesperson (Interview A), advisor (Interview B; Interview E), or statesman (Interview D), the nuanced “leadership” responsibilities of WIB chairs were articulated through participants’ authentic narratives.

**Workforce investment board (WIB) chair managerial role.** While supervisory and managerial tasks were easy for participants to recall, one would be remiss to infer these duties were deemed unimportant or “less than” by board chairs. When discussing the relative importance of managerial versus leadership competencies, one interviewee stated, “We obviously need both” (Interview A) to be successful.

Perfunctory duties of state-level WFD board chairs fell into seven main categories, according to study participants. Major themes described include (a) regulatory compliance, (b) fiscal oversight, (c) performance monitoring, (d) personnel management, (e) customer advocacy, (f) work assignments, and (g) administrative duties.

**Regulatory compliance.** One interviewee described the compliance role of the state-level board chair in the following terms:

I would break the responsibilities down into a couple of general categories. I guess the first would be *compliance*. Part of our responsibility is to make sure that all the title programs that we have, that we receive federal money for, are appropriately administered throughout the state and that the local . . . or regional boards that actually do the work—that they’re compliant—their plans and execution of those plans is compliant with the law. We deliver that through a number of mechanisms—regardless of how it’s delivered—we see our responsibility as making sure that we’re compliant. (Interview B)
Fiscal oversight. Given that oversight responsibilities of state WIB boards are prescribed by federal, and often state, law (Interview C), one might assume that leaders deem their role to monitor public programs as a pedestrian exercise, but as one participant explained, “It’s not so much checking off the boxes” (Interview C). Oversight responsibilities—when performed effectively—help citizens achieve positive sustainable outcomes. Describing the importance of oversight responsibilities, one WFD board chair shared,

So [we] take an area of the state and go into a [local] workforce development board and you can look at how the monies were being leveraged. One very clear example, there was one workforce development board that was spending a ton of their money on cosmetology services because they had two or three providers that had power politically. It was very easy to have a lot of people who knocked on the one-stop door, people who were unemployed or lost their job and were looking for a job, to say “okay, well become a cosmetologist and gain the skill to cut hair and do nails and those kinds of things” and with very, very poor outcomes because, obviously, there are some jobs in those areas, but not hundreds and hundreds. (Interview C)

Additionally, board chairs “make sure that we are spending our federal funds wisely and in all regions of the state” (Interview F). As a private-sector player in the complex WFD system, board chairs perceive themselves to be somewhat less directly influenced by regional or party politics, offering the system an independent voice to prevent unfair distribution of benefits to any particular group or constituency. Providing a balanced perspective on the resource distribution debate was mentioned, as was the tendency of the WFD system to privilege urban populations over rural communities (Interview F).

Performance monitoring. As the cosmetology narrative illustrates, the concern expressed was not with the quality of the beautician training but rather with the poor outcomes for job seekers. The misalignment of training opportunities with the reality of a saturated personal care service sector resulted in disappointment for many job seekers. Board
chairs underscored the importance of ensuring that “performance” or “governance” subcommittees frequently assess how well WFD programs meet the needs of businesses and job seekers as a core mission of their role (Interviews C).

“So, we’ve made significant progress in getting more accountability and oversight of the local workforce development boards,” stated one interviewee (Interview C). Of paramount importance for this participant was the makeup of local WFD board membership, the focus of local initiatives, and the strength of collaboration between local boards and the business community. Specifically, the state board was there “just to make sure . . . that [the local boards] are connected to the local economy and that they are training and using their dollars for skills that are in demand” (Interview C).

**Personnel management.** Supervisory responsibilities were also easily identified by study participants, including the selection and performance of government employees who staff the board and the appointment of volunteer board members themselves (Interview F). As one chair put it, “so one [of my responsibilities] is making sure that the staff—like any leadership position when you have people reporting to you—to make sure that they are performing their duties . . . that we have the right people on the bus, so to speak” (Interview C).

The importance of selecting the right personnel was magnified when interviewees discussed assembling board membership:

The challenge is to make sure that we have the right people on the state employment training commission. So, it’s making sure that we have the right talent at the table, and for me it’s not just having a kind of [take-out] menu: *so many from labor . . . so many from within the organization.* (Interview C)
The quality and experience level of board members were deemed critical by chairs for achieving superior outcomes for state citizens. The industry sectors we have [on our board] are creating the most sustainable jobs for the future. It’s making sure we have those organizations around the table—not just representatives, but thought leaders, people that can really help us navigate and come up with better strategies to train our citizens to get jobs in those industries. (Interview C)

As another interviewee shared, their role is “to make sure we’ve got the right people on the board from the business community—we need to be sure we’re putting the right people in place to help us” (Interview F).

Board chairs stressed the importance of fair and equitable representation in board composition:

One [of my responsibilities] is to make sure that we have a board that’s representative of the state, both from the standpoint of the employer community, as well as the service community, education system, and of course, we have representatives from the [state] Senate and House of Representatives. (Interview F)

The chair went on to say,

A balanced board is key. . . . Having a good board, a representative board, and a motivated board, to me, is very, very key, because that helps us then make sure that our goals are just what the state . . . needs. (Interview F)

Customer advocacy. WIB board chairs view themselves as members of a larger WFD enterprise, replete with interrelated client populations. Of paramount importance, according to one participant, is to “keep your eye on the ball, and keep your customers in mind. Your customers are two things, they’re the businesses that are creating jobs and building the economy, and the customers are those people who need jobs” (Interview E). To further complicate matters, the diversity of job seekers was not lost on the chairs, as they question how to provide effective service for “the unemployed, . . . people who are looking to skill-up, or dislocated workers—whatever the group is” (Interview B).
As private-sector leaders themselves, board chairs helped facilitate constructive inquiry among WFD service providers, seeking a deeper understanding of the needs of industry. As one interviewee shared, their role is to “understand what industry’s needs are—understand them in depth. What do they really need, not just ‘I need a bunch of welders,’ but understand what you aren’t [currently] getting [from the workforce system] and why aren’t you getting it” (Interview E).

Work assignments. Another key responsibility of state-level board chairs, according to interviewees, is reviewing mandatory government reports (Interview E) and assigning subcommittees that transform these reports into tangible results—in other words, “really making [the WFD pipeline report] actionable” (Interview A).

Said one interviewee, “We work really hard to activate [new members] into the council very quickly. I find out what their interests are and find ways to make them successful, instead of just saying ‘hey, everybody’s got to be on two committees’” (Interview A). As one participant shared,

When I first came on, it took me probably a good three years before I knew what the heck I was supposed to be doing as a council member, so it took that long to even get engaged. That’s one of the main things that we [do]—the minute we have new council members we get them put onto subcommittees . . . and give them a role of some sort. (Interview D)

Administrative duties. In addition to monitoring and measuring the performance of the WFD system, board chairs were quick to acknowledge other tactical responsibilities related to the role. “I chair all the quarterly meetings as well as special meetings. I work with developing and approving the agenda with our job services [personnel]” (Interview E).
While the managerial duties of a state-level board chair are foundational to the success of the WFD system, participants shared their concerns about developing a myopic perspective if they dwell upon these activities:

I think there could be a tendency to get all tied up and focused on, what I will call, the ‘bureaucracy’ of workforce development. Which is to say, “we’ve got this program and we’ve got this reporting requirement—here’s our statistics.” (Interview E)

This interviewee went on to say, “You can get all wrapped up in that, I think, and maybe lose the big picture” (Interview E).

**WIB chair leadership role.** Big-picture issues, according to another interviewee, are addressed through the chair’s leadership duties. “I think in a leadership role you really need to keep your head up in the political environment—know what’s coming and what trends we need to be in front of rather than being reactive to” (Interview A).

State board chairs understand that they are responsible to “oversee the state workforce system—especially for WIOA dollars” (Interview C). The administrative and oversight duties inherent in the role, while deemed essential, were not where WIB chairs expended the majority of their time or effort. The data suggest that the majority of their attention, focus, and energy is spent on leading people and directing the processes that result in positive outcomes for citizens.

To categorize these WIB chairs’ perceptions of leadership, comments are framed according to the three Rs of 21st-century education: relationships, relevance, and rigor (McNulty & Quaglia, 2007). Board chairs attend to the relationships necessary to generate cooperation and support among the myriad players within the loosely coupled WFD ecosystem. Likewise, they remain ever vigilant to the relevance of WFD programs and
initiatives to the current and future needs of society. Lastly, leaders establish and maintain standards for the rigor of processes, norms, and products within their sphere of influence.

*Relationships.* As one board chair joked, managing the relationships within and among players of the complex WFD system is like “trying to keep all the horses in the barn” (Interview A). The system comprises many players, and board chairs provide stewardship of these relationships as a prime objective. The care and nurturing provided by board chairs were described as relationships among six different entities: (a) board members, (b) support staff, (c) elected officials, (d) federal agencies, (e) service providers, and (f) system customers. Each constituent group offered unique leadership challenges and opportunities according to state-level board chairs and is addressed separately.

*Relationship with board members.* Arguably the most nuanced is the role that board chairs play in managing relationships among the members of their respective councils. Closely linked to administrative duties, board chairs describe the chair–member relationship as focused on coordination. As the coxswain’s call keeps rowers aligned (Interview B), “my role as the chairman is to keep all the members, just in my opinion, keep all the members engaged and [moving] in the right direction as far as the subcommittees and executive team. So, it’s more of a leader to keep everyone on the same track” (Interview D). Another interviewee shared, “If you’ve got somebody that’s not on the same page that makes it a lot tougher to have a robust delivery system. Instead of all paddling together, you’ve got some folks going in different directions and that can be real challenging” (Interview B).

That said, board chairs understand that their role transcends simple task administration. They are responsible to monitor board member energy and commitment to the WFD mission and vision. As one interviewee stated, “so, a lot of it, I don’t want to say
it’s being a cheerleader, but on some level, it is! You keep people excited about how important the work is” (Interview A).

Board chairs believe in WFD work and share this conviction with their council members. “You know, I’ve always held [our state] up as a leader, whether or not the rest of the world or nation recognizes us as it—I’ve always considered us that” (Interview B).

To generate and maintain enthusiasm with the team, chairs employed a number of different strategies. “I think the number one thing that I can do as a leader or someone trying to lead is provide energy and really communicate the success stories” (Interview A).

Empowering board members was seen as a priority by state-level chairs. As one participant commented, it was important that they create an atmosphere where “people on the board . . . don’t feel like chopped liver—[they] are there to attend and contribute, to speak out, to work on our task forces and committees” (Interview F).

To achieve positive outcomes, interviewees employed different organizational strategies to maximize member engagement. “We’re now introducing a proposed change in how we’re structured that we hope will enhance, not only the speed [with which the system can respond to businesses]—but also the level of engagement of the individuals” (Interview B). One subject maintained enthusiasm for the work through mindfully assigning short-term projects:

I’m a firm believer in not having [standing] committees—I think there should be initiatives where we need to get a body of work done. . . . It has a starting point “here” and an ending point of “three months from now” and then it will be disbanded. So, we don’t have, with very few exceptions, we don’t have ongoing committees that are “death by a thousand razor blades.” (Interview A)
This leader confirmed that the transient nature of work assignments was intended to be motivational, stating, “I try to keep people moving within the organization—[to] keep their energy levels up” (Interview A).

Chairs reported spending a good deal of time thinking about what motivates individual board members, as a coach seeks ways to bring out the best in athletes. The following excerpt offers an eloquent description of the calculus chairs employ as they ponder the best way to meet important WFD goals:

I’ve reported to boards, and I’ve been an executive director at different times and worked for boards, and I’ve categorized any board or council into three buckets. One is the ones that are so passionate they’ll bring new ideas and they’ll do anything for the organization. The middle third would be those that if you ask them to do something they’ll do it, but they’re not going to take a tremendous amount of initiative . . . and the third bucket is really the ones that you wonder if they’re alive. They won’t do anything. So, my strategy has always been, how do I take each one of the board members and raise them up one level from where they are? (Interview A)

As this leader explained, chairs strive to find ways to motivate board members “if they’re willing and able to put in a little bit of extra time and effort”—to effectively move them up one rung on the engagement ladder (Interview A).

Given that appointed council members are volunteers, board leaders lack traditional lines of authority common in private-sector roles. Another strategy board chairs employed was to connect with board member emotions, bringing them in direct contact with the people and stories that illustrate both the hardships citizens encounter and the successes that WFD programs have helped facilitate. As one leader shared,

in-person council meetings, which are two full days, [are done] three times a year. We take at least four stories that are great success stories in the local community that our meeting is being held in, and talk about the different people that are being successful. (Interview A)
Moving council meetings out of “the state capital” and into the community can present significant challenges. Boards have dozens of members, with some boards comprising more than 50 individual representatives. For some leaders, the logistics of moving meetings to more remote locations require participants to travel hundreds of miles on multiple occasions over the course of a year (Interview C). “As a council, we try to go to every portion of the state to have different quarterly meetings” (Interview D).

The willingness of board members, commission staff, and council leaders to endure what can be very significant travel should not be overlooked. Neither should the importance of providing board members with authentic, firsthand experience of WFD in action. As one chair recommended, “don’t go to the Department of Labor and sit in their boardroom—we don’t need to do that anymore. Get out to those career centers, hold the meeting, and also see them in action. Let [the local one-stop staff] brief us and tell us what’s going on in the real world” (Interview F).

Board chairs see “field trips” as an effective vehicle for educating commission members about the similarities and differences in the workforce system across geographies and industry sectors. Educating council members was often cited as one of the most important functions of the chair’s role. One participant stated, “I’m trying . . . to educate all of the workforce development members from the ‘big picture’—what is it the state needs, what does industry need, [and] where are we running short” (Interview E).

To raise awareness about WFD issues, one chair routinely sponsored an industry sector or client population to speak at commission meetings:

The first group that I showcased when I first starting doing it was the [underserved] population. They are . . . not as highly skilled . . . but a fast-growing workforce in our state. I brought in people from . . . the training center, and different [subsets of the
underserved population] to talk, because the needs of one [area] may be different than another [area]. (Interview E)

In addition to showcasing underserved populations, this interviewee also noted that the board directly supported the special workforce concerns of new Americans and people with disabilities:

Keeping all the council members aware and keeping always focused on [real-world concerns]—that’s really where the rubber meets the road. That’s where our economy grows and that’s where jobs are created, and that’s where we really move the needle. (Interview E)

Relationship with support staff. The role that council chairs have as coordinator, cheerleader, or coach is not limited to other members of the state-level commission. Most study participants noted that they have one or more full- or part-time government employees staffing their boards. Providing emotional support to staff members was also seen as a high priority among commission leaders. As one leader described,

I have staff support in the state capital in the Department of Labor. . . . They’re wonderful people, they’re dedicated—they are true partners. They are my supporters as I carry out my volunteer duties as a chairman of the workforce board. But sometimes their morale lags because they’re not getting enough support, or funds, or Washington is laying on so many regulations and prescriptive requirements that they don’t know if they’re going to have the time to do all of this stuff, and that we may be chasing our tails and focusing on the wrong things. (Interview F)

Working within the WFD context can be frustrating for support staff, as illustrated by the previous vignette. Maintaining a positive attitude, celebrating success, and attending to the energy level of career center employees providing service to clients and support to commissions were reported to be major parts of the job:

So, part of my job challenge is to try and get in there and get them support and boost morale and let them know that, yeah, we are making progress. You’ve got the numbers—you can see what we’re doing. That is something that most of my peers throughout the country find is something they just have to do. (Interview F)
Pohl and Galletta (2017) described engagement as the “conceptual opposite of a burnout” (p. 61). Preventing burnout was reported to be a concern for career WFD professionals at all levels, according to study participants:

Even the cabinet officer, the Commissioner of Labor . . . has [his or her] ups and downs. Sometimes it’s good just to have lunch and shore [him or her] up a bit, because it’s a tough battle. We’re fighting for funds, we’re fighting for attention, we’re fighting for their programs to make them a priority, and maybe someone else on the cabinet doesn’t think so. (Interview F)

Board chairs demonstrated great commitment to creating and sustaining strong, positive relationships with commission staff. As one interviewee stated, “that’s foremost in my mind and that’s why I make a lot of trips to the state capital. It’s about an hour from my house, but I enjoy doing it because I enjoy [the personal] contact” (Interview F).

Relationship with elected officials. In addition to “keeping the support staff . . . motivated” (Interview F), WIB chairs maintain a special relationship with their states’ chief executives. “One of the functions of the workforce development council is to advise the governor on workforce development issues and to help out on some of the strategic thinking and plans” (Interview E).

WIB chairs enact and operationalize the WFD strategies articulated by the governor. In one state represented in the study, the leader explained that he or she was “working with the governor’s office on diversification—bringing in manufacturing . . . and different type businesses to diversify [the state’s] economy” (Interview D).

In addition to providing this operational support, council leaders “act as an advisor to the governor and the administration on [workforce] policy, and hopefully move down along with the legislature on supporting some of the efforts” (Interview B). Another WIB chair admitted, “I spend a lot of time in dialog with planning on the policy side” (Interview C). In
their capacity as policy advisor, leaders must exercise concise and persuasive communications. As one interviewee exclaimed, “how do we tell a legislator how important things are, the work we are doing, and that they should support it without giving them 800 pages to read through?” (Interview A).

The WIB chair role includes fiscal advocacy for state funding in addition to providing input in policy formation and operational assessment:

We come up with some strategic recommendations for the governor in different areas, so that when the various departments begin to develop the state budget, at least they have the input from the council of what our thinking is and what we’ve identified. I think this really helps unify the effort throughout the state. (Interview E)

*Relationship with federal agencies.* Advocacy for workforce issues among government agencies was not limited to state politics, according to study participants. Under the auspices of the National Association of State Workforce Board Chairs (NASWBC; 2017), an affiliate of the National Governors Association (NGA), state-level WIB chairs share best practices, conduct policy research, and develop position papers designed to educate federal policy makers about workforce issues.

These joint efforts influenced the development of new legislation and facilitate the interpretation of enacted regulations. Board chairs interviewed in this study shared their support for the work of the NASWBC. Presently the organization is working on the implications of WIOA legislation. As one interviewee shared, “it seems that when WIOA was written, it was written more specific to bigger [i.e., more populated] states. So, it’s been very frustrating and confusing for us in [our] state” (Interview D).
Leaders commented on the importance of national advocacy as a positive and productive vehicle for generating meaningful dialog at the federal level. Lamenting the lack of full participation in the association, one participant commented,

What amazes me . . . is that when I attend [the national association meetings], on a semiannual basis, the meeting of our peers under the umbrella of the National Governors Association, generally speaking, only about 30 states attend. That astounds me! Because the chairs that don’t come to the meetings, they deny themselves the opportunity to learn from others, denies them the opportunity to network, to demonstrate the strengths of their own programs, denies all of us the chance to convince the NGA and others to make changes in the bill, or a law like WIOA, so it will work better at the state and local level. (Interview F)

As the participants shared, “we’re working on legislative changes” for WIOA, with the intent to make the new law more flexible to adapt to local conditions at the state level (Interview C). With this in mind, it seems reasonable that full participation by all 55 potential members (i.e., 50 states plus 5 U.S. territories) of the NASWBC would be desirable to provide solidarity in messaging to policy makers in Washington. “I know it’s easy to say ‘give us the money—we’ll decide how best to spend it.’ Of course, there’s got to be some parameters, but give us a little bit more flexibility and we can really make things work” (Interview F).

Relationship with service providers. Arguably the most important role played by WIB chairs is to foster collaboration and strong partnerships among the multitude of service providers in the WFD network:

Basically, the role [of the WIB chair] is encouraging and developing, and nurturing, partnerships regardless of where they are in the economy. Whether they’re public, private, or employer groups, or chambers [of commerce], or nonprofits, it really doesn’t matter. We have a tremendous . . . role . . . developing those relationships. (Interview B)

According to interviewees, maintaining close relationships requires frequent contact between the different stakeholder groups:
What is important for me—again, going back to those agencies—is that we have a really close relationship. In fact, we have a monthly meeting with the head of the Department of Education, Labor, and Workforce Development, and Department of Higher Education where we are pretty much looking at all the opportunities and challenges that each of these organizations face, and coming up with solutions and strategies and pathways, I’ll call them. (Interview C)

Conducting frequent meetings with service providers was a very common strategy to foster and maintain effective working relationships. As another interviewee shared, “[we conduct] weekly meetings to make sure that K through 12, community college, and universities are all in one mind, as well as the tech training and apprenticeships [programs]” (Interview D).

In addition to creating and maintaining strong, collaborative relationships with service providers, state WIBs are also responsible for monitoring, measuring, and reporting on the quality of the services provided to citizens. “You know, important for me and for the commission is that we are engaged with all the significant players that have responsibility for outcomes. Whether it’s the Department of Education, or Labor and Workforce Development, or Human Services—especially with people with disabilities and those in special groups” (Interview C). As another chair pointed out, “you’ve got partnership development in one form, but then [also] ‘how do we make those partners more effective in working together?’” (Interview B).

Improving system efficiency and effectiveness was certainly reflected among the list of managerial responsibilities study participants codified. Yet, as one interviewee noted, the board chair’s responsibility to create a collaborative culture among the diverse service provider network carries a subtle mandate. “Well, I think, you know, that it’s about trying to get people to take a step back from their own protective instincts” (Interview A). Sharing
budget, programs, and other resources requires stakeholders to look beyond the survival of
their own initiatives and maintain a focus on what chairs describe as the “big picture”
(Interview D; Interview E). The leadership role, therefore, is to elevate discourse so that our
“better angels” prevail, encouraging the sharing of power beyond traditional agency borders
to support the common good (Interview A).

Establishing strong partnerships with the education community system was
universally perceived as a top objective:

Another priority, obviously, is to get closer to the education community, starting right
with the community colleges. We do a pretty good job, but we have to do a better job
in bonding with, and making sure we’re in line with, our community college system.
As you know, community colleges are preparing people for, what I would call, “real
jobs.” (Interview F)

Relationship with system customers. The pragmatism of connecting with “real jobs”
seems self-evident and predicated upon strong relationships with the business community:

Without them, without the manufacturer’s association, without the unions and others,
our programs aren’t going to be successful because employers are still going to be
floundering, looking around figuring out how to fill these jobs, and that’s wrong
because we’ve got the resources, we’ve got the people. (Interview F)

As mentioned previously, WIB chairs describe system customers as both the “job
seeker” and “job creator” communities (Interview E). That said, interviewees were quick to
point out that the WFD system relationship with the business community required constant
vigilance. “Connectivity is a key, key word for all of us. Connecting to the employer is
critical—so many employers don’t have a clue as to our existence, and to what is offered out
there” (Interview F). “We have people, employers and employees, or people seeking work,
who are so unaware of what exists that they go to libraries. Think of this, they go to libraries
and see if there’s any way they can get help somewhere” (Interview F).
All interviewees addressed the need for enhanced business communication and outreach in this strategic planning cycle. The goal of public relation campaigns was described by one council leader as 

   to make sure that we’re connecting to that employer community—letting them know what training opportunities exist, and where the resources are, and then find qualified employees, or employees who are trainable. I have to say, on that score, we could do better. (Interview F)

This leader went on to explain how the state was reinvigorating a program that had been launched in the past but was displaced by other priorities:

   We’re going back to a plan that we had a couple of years ago and deploy groups like the state chamber of commerce, and all the local chambers, to help us get the word out to the employer community. We exist—we’re here to help. We have programs that work—we have career centers, not only [for] people seeking jobs, but where employers can walk in a career center and say, “hey, I’m expanding. I need 30 people in this area. Here are the kinds of people I need. Can you help me?” (Interview F)

In addition to raising awareness about WFD services among businesses, chairs were also quick to point out that preconceived notions about the system need to be addressed with industry leaders:

   A lot of [businesses] are very leery of government period—and don’t want to do business with government. They think there are too many strings attached, and yet when it comes time to find welders and technology specialists, and even health care specialists—they’re always crying, you know, that they can’t find qualified employees. (Interview F)

As successful business leaders in their own right, WIB chairs provide an insider’s voice to the discourse on WFD. This expertise places them in a unique position to influence thought leaders within the larger business community. As one chair commented, “having people that have run businesses and made a payroll—I think having them be at the forefront of your strategy will help move [WFD] forward” (Interview A).
As peers, WIB chairs can educate and influence business leaders about best practices in WFD. As one interviewee noted, board chairs can be effective advocates for “flexibility within companies, and child care, and flexibility in how people work—when you work, and sharing of jobs, and those kinds of [things]” among business leaders within their local communities (Interview B).

In addition to local businesses engaging in the system, participants commented on the important role that business organizations play in message transfer and service provisioning. “We need the Manufacturers Association to help us, we need a lot of these business organizations and trade associations—we just have to deploy them to, number one, believe in what we’re doing and help us connect” (Interview F).

Relevance. Maintaining robust partnerships with local businesses was described by participants as a key feature in keeping the WFD system relevant (Interview A). In addition, study subjects were quick to mention the need for board chairs to stay on top of environmental change, including economic trends, political landscapes, and shifting demographics.

Economic trends. Understanding economic underpinning is vital for council leadership. “To me, all of the workforce system is tied to the economy and it comes back to the companies that are expanding, growing, and what we’re attracting to the state—and as you know, skilled labor is a huge, huge factor in the decision” (Interview C). Maintaining an awareness of trends prepares the system for emerging jobs, or job losses, as the case may be. “I always try to relay to everyone ‘let’s try to be proactive rather than reactive’ in this economy that we’re faced with. It’s always hard . . . without a crystal ball” (Interview D).
Some changes are inevitable, and now is the time to be thinking about addressing important economic shifts, according to study participants. In describing shifts in the transportation, logistics, and distribution industry prominent in one state, the board chair commented, “When autonomous trucks hit the road in four or five years, it’s going to cut a whole lot of jobs. It’s not going to happen overnight, but over several years, they will be lost from the industry moving to autonomous vehicles” (Interview C).

*Political landscape.* In addition to change driven by technology, another participant noted that changes in political regimes affected the ability of WIBs to meet the needs of citizens. Keeping the council focused on the needs of customers, regardless of the shifting political landscape, was deemed vital to the role of the WIB chair:

As the political environment continues to change, budgets continue to change, just trying to make sure that the overall mission and vision . . . doesn’t get diluted or diffused based on changes in any of those environments. Obviously that is a very challenging environment, because all of those are always evolving and changing. But really, it’s trying to make sure that everything we do keeps those . . . aligned and at the top of the list of everything we do. (Interview A)

*Shifting demographics.* Detecting and addressing shifts in other environmental factors also emerged as significant to the leadership role. The most prominent shift that impacts WFD, according to board chairs, concerned state demographics. Most interviewees commented on the negative effect of the migration of state youth to other locales. “The great fear, remember, in [our state] is that we’re not like . . . some other states. We have a little bit of a brain drain. People looking for higher paid jobs go elsewhere. Gosh, that hurts, that hurts [our state]” (Interview F).

To counter the debilitating effects of youth flight, multiple participants shared effective strategies for enticing youth to return to their homes after journeying outside the
state to attend college or establish careers. Describing one such program, the leader reported that

the [program] is . . . the one that has captured some of our youth and brought them back. Also, for those youth, that are maybe wanting to leave the state, they understand how important it is now to stay in the state. Because of the [program] and our emphasis on ‘you’re born in [our state]—stay in [our state],’ we’ve been very successful in getting our youth to come back. (Interview D)

The misalignment between current and projected demographic data and future workforce needs is in the forefront of state WIB agendas. When speculating about the needs of businesses, one leader commented,

If we look into the issues that we’re facing as a workforce development organization, certainly we’re transitioning from a “skills gap” to a “people gap.” We just don’t have enough kids coming through the pipeline—look at today versus 10 from now, we’re seeing about a 10,000-person reduction in students coming into the workforce. At the same time, we’re seeing substantially more than that leaving the workforce as baby boomers leave. So, we’re transitioning from what we’ve called a “skills gap” for the past decade to what’s just going to be a “people gap.” So, having the highest possible level of people engaged in the workforce, in [our state] we do very well in terms of engagement of the number of people in the population that are engaged in the workforce. (Interview B)

Addressing the looming “people gap” requires a variety of recruitment strategies, according to WIB chairs. While retaining or reintegrating native state talent will help, future gaps will not be filled entirely through this tactic:

In addition to [recruiting our emigrated youth] though, we realize we need to expand upon people who aren’t from here. So, we’ve been having some degree of success of doing that as well as looking at underserved populations. We have new Americans coming in . . . who we’ve had a lot of success in our state in placing them in manufacturing. (Interview E)

**Rigor.** Board chairs recognize that the employee recruitment efforts of the extended WFD system will do little to, as one interviewee put it, “move the needle” (Interview E) if the quality of jobs produced by the economy are insufficient to sustain families:
It’s one thing to have service sector jobs, and it’s another one to have high-pay, high-demand jobs. The skill sets required to have that don’t come easy. So, in our state for these past 15 years we’ve been focused on those sorts of careers. The service jobs kind of come along as your population—as your economy grows, those [service sector] jobs get created. [Service sector] jobs got to be filled also, but you really want to focus on what’s really going to move the needle on the economy. (Interview E)

Targeting high-end businesses that generate family-supporting wages requires a WFD system that can react quickly and effectively to business needs. Board chairs understand the challenges faced by the culture clash of public, private, and nonprofit system elements. According to one board chair, “you know I hate this term, but [the key is] ‘working at the speed of business’” (Interview A). From a practical perspective, government agencies subscribe to the democratic process, which, through it’s very design, moves slowly, allowing for all voices to be heard and varying perspectives to be considered and analyzed. “I liken it to business looks at their watch when they are thinking about getting something done and education and government looks at the calendar,” joked one participant (Interview B).

Temporal disconnects, if left unchecked, can have devastating effects on board member engagement, according to one participant:

You know you put a CEO of [an] organization as part of a board, and you’re either going to get stuff done or you’re going to lose him. They’re not going to come very often, or come at all, if they don’t feel like they’re contributing at a high level. They have pretty high bar when you look at some of the folks that serve on the board. (Interview B)

The disconnect between the various elements of the greater WFD system is not limited to the approach to process legitimacy alone but is also rooted in the language used among different stakeholders:

We try to have representatives on the board that work [in] all sectors. Labor and manufacturing and research and higher ed[ucation]—everybody’s at the table. I don’t think that we’ve had trouble getting people to come to the table, and the reason is everybody is really suffering for talent. Everybody’s got an interest for why they want to come to the table. Sometimes the challenge is understanding those biases that
different parts of the economy have, and getting their language. If you listen to an *academic* and you listen to a *manufacturer* and you put the two in the same room it’s almost like they’re not talking the same language! (Interview B)

WIB chairs commented on the importance of their role as a statesman, of sorts, acting as an informed intermediary between the foreign cultures rooted in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors of the extended WFD network. Their experience working with and among members of the different communities allows them to interpret and prioritize system inputs and outputs. As arbiters of subcommittee assignments, WIB chairs possess legitimate authority to assign cross-functional, cross-agency teams to address business needs, allowing for interactions and dialog that help bridge cultural and communication gaps. This activity helps develop “the partners that can deliver; either helps deliver the federal programs or makes connections to those programs. There’s a group that works on making those partnerships effective, or essentially connecting the dots” (Interview B).

Participants reflected on the role that they play in achieving rigor in the performance measures for WFD efforts. This role goes beyond adhering to mandated reporting schedules promulgated by state or federal regulations. “I’m not an economist, I’m not a statistician, but the bottom line is, I like to look at the numbers,” stated one study subject (Interview F). That said, it was noted that officials need to exercise critical thinking and analysis when reviewing summary reports. For example, stated one WIB chair, “Our unemployment numbers look good, but you have to look *behind* those. A lot of people have stopped looking—a lot of people are underemployed. This is true nationwide” (Interview F). Insisting on rigorous analysis of labor and workforce data was deemed important to achieving positive outcomes for citizens.
Summary for Research Question 1. The state-level WIB chairs describe their role in a complex, nuanced fashion. Figure 9 provides a conceptual illustration of the bifurcated nature of the role as described by study participants.

The responsibility of this appointed office was described by incumbent chairs as containing two separate but related roles. The first and most easily identified duties of the state WIB chair are collectively referred to as the “management” responsibilities. Activities that were intended to ensure compliance with federal or state regulations, manage effective staffing, assign subcommittees and tasks, plan and conduct meetings, or complete mandatory reports were all seen as “perfunctory” or “basic” chair tasks. Management duties, in essence, ensured that states *do things correctly*. Although admittedly important to the success of the WFD system, board chairs spent far less time articulating administrative functions when describing their role.
Figure 9. Bifurcated role of state-level workforce investment board chairs.
Rather, it was the complex leadership role that dominated interviewee dialog. Opposed to managerial duties, leadership responsibilities sought to do the right things. Knowing what do to, and motivating the complex, loosely coupled, multicultural network to mobilize effectively around objectives, is, as one participant stated, “where the rubber meets the road” (Interview E). To achieve success, leaders described the care and nurturing with which they tend the myriad relationships among members of the WFD network.

As successful private-sector leaders in their own right, participants shared the role they play as interpreter, coach, cheerleader, educator, and analyst. Their expertise helped to bridge cultural and communication gaps between stakeholder groups, and when they spoke with one voice, as they do through the NASWBC, they helped establish the proper course for national and state workforce policy. Mindful attention to the relevance of programs and the rigor with which they hold themselves, and the programs they oversee, accountable were common themes that emerged from their narratives.

As one leader succinctly claimed, “it’s a big job—big responsibility for somebody who’s a volunteer” (Interview F). How these individuals learned to be effective leaders of WFD boards is the subject of the next research question.

**Interview findings for Research Question 2. How do these leaders perceive personal learning as a contributor to successful WFD leadership?**

The WIB chairs who participated in this study offered a variety of personal lessons learned throughout their tenure to which they attribute their success. Additionally, their narratives illustrate the different learning modalities employed to achieve these insights. To explore the role that personal learning has as a contributing factor in successful state-level WIB leadership, data have been organized as follows: (a) what lessons have WIB chairs
learned, (b) how have they learned these important lessons, and lastly, (c) what motivates them to continue in their personal learning journey?

**Personal learning.** The following sections describe personal lessons learned.

**WFD problems are wicked problems.** Study participants described WFD challenges as *wicked* problems (Rittel & Webber, 1973). When addressing the challenge of altering customer intuition about workforce issues, one leader stated, “These problems are partly rooted in society and the norms of society. So, how do we change that?” (Interview C).

Leaders recognized that beliefs and attitudes may not change as quickly as market forces dictate. The significant debt incurred by families to cover college tuition was noted as one example of how society perpetuates problems:

> You know, some of this—some of these challenges are pretty hard. For example, . . . we’re a very well educated state, probably more than most. Parents of students, and the students themselves have the perception that the future is to get a four-year degree. And you know, in today’s economy, that may not be the best for a lot of students. (Interview C)

Addressing the issues of America’s “second-chance” citizens (Giloth, 2004) was universally perceived as a *wicked* problem by state-level board chairs. “I’d say my biggest challenge is, where I haven’t felt the degree of success is probably in the [underserved population]. They have some very deep-rooted, systematic issues that go back over 100 years” (Interview E).

Persistent problems are rooted in both structural and cultural elements. When discussing an underserved population, one interviewee noted that businesses “have a ready workforce right there. But often times you have requirements, for example, if you’re a truck driver or working for a [sensitive industry] . . . you have to have a clean criminal record or
pass a drug or alcohol testing requirement. So sometimes that disadvantages some of [the underserved population]” (Interview E).

In addition, there’s a whole cultural thing that we assume, that for some [underserved populations] are not a given. Things like coming to work every day and showing up on time. In the [underserved population] culture, that is not necessarily a given. That actually has to be taught by their community college . . . stuff like that, and so you start at a lower base, if you will, with training. So, some of the things we do with the community colleges to help them understand some of the soft skills and things that are needed to be successful. (Interview E)

When addressing these wicked problems, board chairs described bridging the gap with direct communication and personal connection. Face-to-face meetings held in the community established space for meaningful dialog between WFD leaders and constituents. One participant noted,

I don’t come with any money attached, so I’m not like a federal program. So, I can only give [parents] guidance and talk about . . . if you want good-paying careers for your children here’s some of the things—some of the areas where we see the jobs and where we see the skills that are needed. (Interview E)

*Pick your battles.* WIB chairs demonstrated self-awareness about their role and the limitation of their legitimate authority (Interview E). With limited funding and no direct positional power, leaders described taking a pragmatic approach to effecting change within the WFD system. In reflecting on how he or she approaches problems, on interviewee shared the following advice:

The other thing I’ve learned—and I spent 12 years in the public sector before moving back to the private sector—which has been for the past 10 years—what I would say is, there [are] a lot of times when there are people who will beat their head against the wall trying to get others to agree with them, and I’ve a bit of a different thought process in trying to lead our organization. You know, if people don’t want to play in the sandbox, let’s not worry about it. Let’s go to where the sandbox has players and we’ll do it—and I hate to say it this way—we’ll do it without them. (Interview A)

Leaders were quick to mention that moving ahead without hesitant stakeholders was not an open door for isolationism. In the spirit of collaboration, WIBs maintained an open
invitation for all parties to engage at any time regardless of differing opinions about the strategic direction of the council:

We do have some counties . . . that think the state’s role should be to have a celebration and hand out checks, you know, a couple of times a year and then get the heck out of the way. We’re not of that mind-set with our council. So honestly, we just kind of worked around them, and we give them plenty of opportunity [to participate]—continue to invite them into the things that we’re working on—but trying not to get diluted down by the few, and try to stay motivated by the many. (Interview A)

Keep your eye on the big picture. Knowing which battles to wage, and which to pass, requires wisdom that board chairs attributed to both experience and focus. Having a strong grasp of the state’s economic strategic vision helped board chairs make vital decisions about where and when to expend vital resources. When asked about what is important for success, one participant noted that chairs should maintain

perspective to the locale a little bit—to understand what’s really going to happen. I don’t think a chair can just be reactive to what’s going on around us. You need to be proactive and have a vision in this position. (Interview C)

Look to the future. Doing the right thing, according to study participants, means board chairs must exercise discipline in balancing their focus between issues of immediate concern, such as major plant closings or administrative duties, and forecasting future needs:

We do, you know, get hunkered down in the into the guidelines and legislative stuff—that’s not my expertise for sure. But I do think that what it takes is somebody who can describe what success looks like 5 years from now—10 years from now—and then begin to challenge people to reach for those goals, rather than the alternative [of] having your head down all the time working on the problems of today. (Interview A)

This balancing act may be more easily said than done. Commission chairs spoke about the devastating effects of layoff in very personal terms. While widespread downsizing was a new phenomenon in some areas of the country (Interview D), in other areas it had become almost commonplace. Relaying this unfortunate and routine experience, one board chair shared,
It’s almost like we get one a month . . . [communities become] like a ghost town. Everything’s shutting down—storefronts boarded up. It’s kind of scary. The school system is floundering. That was a one-horse town. They had an [industrial site] there, and when the site shuts down, it’s over with. (Interview F)

The anxiety and despair among displaced workers were palpable in this board chair’s narrative. “You know, a guy wakes up and he’s laid off—he’s 50 years old, he’s got a mortgage, and he doesn’t know where to go” (Interview F). In addition to displaying empathy and compassion, the chair was able to focus on the board’s efforts to drive connectivity among system partners.

*Rely on your support staff.* One strategy to maintain focus and balance that was common among study participants was the judicious use of professional WFD staff. In describing interpretation of legislative details, one interviewee said,

I don’t have to get all wrapped up in that. I’m fortunate that I have some very competent people at job services who [generate administrative reports]—you know, I sign the letters but they take care of all that jazz. (Interview E).

*Let others shine.* Board chairs were very quick to highlight the contributions of others when describing commission success. Chief among the deserving recipients of praise and recognition were commission staff and board member volunteers. “I would say that I’ve got very good people on the council and the people within the state that I work with are very good. Both are very hardworking and knowledgeable and efficient at what they do” (Interview E). When describing a successful program to return youth to the state after college, the interviewee proudly announced that the concept was the idea of a member of the state department of WFD (Interview E).

As mentioned previously, many board chairs conduct face-to-face meetings in various locations around their states. One outcome of this strategy was to provide local boards and service providers a legitimate platform to highlight their success:
We always hold our spring meeting in [the state capital] because it’s central to the state . . . and that’s where we get the most legislative attendance. The other two in-person meetings, we basically let anyone on the council provide . . . a hosting opportunity and the state still pays for it, but it’s a way to bring people to the community and you organize everything but the [official council] meeting. (Interview A)

Work with business leaders. According to federal regulations set by the WIOA, the majority of state WIB members must represent the private sector. As such, these gubernatorial appointees are recognized leaders in their own right and have, by virtue of their private-sector roles, developed their own expectations for success. As a “leader of leaders,” WIB chairs must, at times, act as an intermediary between member expectations and the reality of operating within the participatory democratic WFD environment:

We have an incredibly strong group of individuals on the workforce investment board—two of the main committees that are part of the board. The challenge is . . . they’re CEO’s and founders of companies and people that are in officer level positions within these organizations. So, squaring the industry, or the employers focus on getting things done quickly with the pace at which government, or sometimes, educational institutions move—those are two very different worlds sometimes—in fact, most times. (Interview B)

Additionally, WIB chairs seek out and facilitate engagement with leaders from the business community at large within their state. Inspiring the business community to become an active player in WFD discourse was described as a daunting yet wildly successful strategy according to one interviewee:

When we started the [job sectors] program out, it was more out of—not desperation—but required, because we had no money. The goal in those days was to try to get [business] people fired up an excited about it . . . in the end—if it’s not industry lead, it will fail. If it’s all just lead by the government side it will never really work because it’s not reacting to business. (Interview A)

The early goal of this state’s sector strategy initiative was aggressive, according to the chair. “When we started that out we wanted to have 100 people that came out and at least half of that be business leaders. Going out to high-level or senior-level [leaders]—like senior
VP/C-suite” (Interview A). Achieving this lofty goal was extremely challenging, yet despite competing with overbooked executive calendars, the sector strategy gamble paid off:

And from that [first meeting], 27 groups and regions committed to being . . . the business champion, with 27 different people saying, “Yes, I will raise my hand and I will lead this, and I will get the other leaders in the industry to come to a meeting and really be a convener.” If it dies from lack of business interest, we just punt—OK, forget it—let’s just move on to the next one. (Interview A)

*Listen when business speaks.* Once the business community becomes engaged with the WFD system, it is vital that the system be responsive to its needs. Not listening to or incorrectly understanding the messages business leaders send can have serious consequences for the state:

The most impressive speech I heard in recent years came from the chairman of [a Fortune 500 Company] who lectured the governor’s years ago at their winter meeting as to what it takes for [that company] to go into a state to build a plant. He laid it right out in terms of “he needs people—skilled people or trainable people.” He needs to be surrounded by educational institutions that see those needed priorities. (Interview F)

Shortly after making that speech to the NGA group, the CEO moved corporate headquarters to the greater metropolitan area of an adjacent state:

What the chairman did was put his money where his mouth is. He was really signaling to the group three years ago that he was going to move his headquarters. Thousands of people we’re talking about here. And it shouldn’t come to anyone’s surprise that he picked [a city with a large number of prestigious universities]. (Interview F).

*Stay the course.* WFD issues are not easy, and as the previous vignette illustrated, sometimes there are winners and losers as policy decisions are enacted. One interviewee shared a story of a difficult policy shift that the state made concerning public school teacher compensation. According to this board chair, teacher’s union rules made it difficult for school systems to differentiate high-performing teachers from low-performing employees.
The state enacted legislation that allowed market conditions to more directly influence teacher compensation:

So what happened initially, you know there was a lot of strife over this, but what happened initially was huge picketing—huge demonstrations—you know, the world was going to come to an end. But now that it’s been in place for a while what we’re finding is that the wages for teachers that do very well is increasing faster than CIP [consumer price index]. (Interview B)

The chair went on to explain how this outcome has affected the state’s K–12 education program:

What’s happened is we’ve seen this shift in reinvestment in education. That change has allowed school districts to pay teachers at higher wages and that’s really been transformational. Especially in areas where there’s a lot of demand and not a lot of folks around. So, as an example, in technical and career education there’s a lack of teachers in that area. The really good ones are making maybe 50 or 60K dollars, but the market is driving them up to 70 and 80K dollars. (Interview B)

The interviewee concluded by sharing, “So, that was a very difficult transition, but it was a [good thing in the end]—I don’t think people could see what essentially a free market could do to teacher compensation” (Interview B).

*It takes time to do it right.* According to the WIB chairs interviewed, leading in the complex WFD environment takes time. It takes time to learn about the system (Interview D), to understand the stakeholders (Interview A), and to formulate appropriate policy and action plans to best serve citizens (Interview F). Said one interviewee,

I spend about 30 hours per week working with the company and I spend an equal amount of time working outside the company on workforce development and other issues. It gets a little easier, not as a time commitment, but in understanding how things link together, it gets easier to be involved with them more over time. (Interview B)

The time commitment was not seen as an issue exclusive to the board chairs themselves. In commenting on the dedication all the stakeholders need to support the strategy of conducting meetings throughout the state, one member shared, “It makes it difficult when
you travel 350 to 400 miles as a council member for a meeting. But we’ve seen the rewards of it, so we’ve all made the buy-in to do that” (Interview C).

Participants were also very sensitive to the balancing act serving on the council had for fellow commissioners:

I’ve had members who have been . . . incredibly good member[s] of the commission and chaired one of our subcommittees. [Their] company was bought out by a company headquartered [elsewhere], any they still had [human resources] responsibilities for all of [our state] operations. They tried to hang on for two years, but they were always flying. The demands of their job were overtaking them. Basically, they said “I have to go, I can’t manage this mission effectively given the responsibilities of my job.” (Interview C)

Having served on boards and commissions for more than a decade, in most instances, study participants noted they have “seen probably seven or eight permutations of that kind of story” (Interview C). Managing their own time efficiently and being mindful of the time and effort their team of volunteers contributes were considered important to the success of the council. Nonetheless, board chairs willingly participate in this important work. “So, even though I’m busy with my regular job, I think time management is always a difficult thing when you’re busy. But on the other hand, I don’t view [this work] as a burden” (Interview E).

The importance of leadership style. When Robert Greenleaf introduced the concept of servant leadership, he described an organic process whereby the primus inter pares, first among equals, emerges to direct the activities of the group for a time (Avolio et al., 2009; Houglum, 2012; Parris & Peachy, 2013). While the role of board chair is, in fact, an appointment, the organic process of servant leadership does not apply. That said, this role is similar to the ideal articulated by Greenleaf in that commission members are, in their own right, successful business leaders, with the chair acting as “first among equals.”
Managing a group of successful leaders requires close attention to their interests, accomplishments, and committee assignments to sustain their level of engagement (Interview B). In addition, traditional command-and-control leadership does not work with teams of this caliber. In providing advice on successful leadership, one participant shared the following warning concerning a management style that does not work in this venue:

I’ve been under past chairmen that got in the way of the council, rather than getting out of the way. “This is what we’re going to do . . . and this is how we’re going to do it” and “this is who I am and I know everything” . . . so my advice to anyone who comes to a volunteer board, like what we have, is only be there to make sure things are done properly. To disseminate the information that needs to be given to the council, and to the subcommittees, and to get out of the way—let them do what they are going to do. Be supportive. I look at my role as the caboose of the train, rather than the engine—just keep pushing the cars where they need to go, get out of the way and let them do it. (Interview D)

We have to figure it out together. When describing a leadership style that was effective in the WFD context, leaders pointed to collaboration as an important contributor to success. “Certainly, collaboration is good—the ability to identify partners, and develop relationships with them, so that the conversation is not in a silo. The conversation is part of the group of people with the resources to make things happen” (Interview C).

Another participant shared the importance of communication and reciprocity in the successful collaborative effort:

I try to leverage some of the other roles that I have, to help with resources. That gives you the opportunity to have those discussions at a higher level and gain input. If you’re working with [stakeholders and offer] to give them resources, they’re a lot more apt to work with you in other initiatives. (Interview B)

The complexity of the WFD environment creates a space where no one person, or one set of rules, truly applies. WIBs and local, state, and federal officials must work together to generate interpretations of enacted legislation that will work for citizens in a wide variety of situations. In describing this difficult task, one interviewee shared the following insights:
There are so many laws that don’t really apply because we’re [a unique WIB design] state, we’re so unique, that we’ve been hitting a few walls . . . The Department of Labor . . . sent [a representative] to our last meeting to go through the law to answer any questions we might have to try to help us either define it, or go back and try to get some clarification from the Department of Labor. When we go back to the Department of Labor—they’re as bamboozled as we are. “We don’t know . . . we don’t know the answers, we want you guys to try to roll this program out and if there are issues or concerns, we’ll take a look them, and if there needs to be clarification or a change, or something like that, we can sure take a look at it.” (Interview D)

As this story suggests, neither the regulators nor the regulated truly understand how the system should work. It is through a process of codiscovery that best practices and new norms evolve over time. In the final analysis, system stakeholders must work together to determine what is best. As the board chair noted, all parties must “work together to try to work this out and make it be a more a business sector–driven program rather than a government-driven program” (Interview D).

**Learning strategies.** The following sections describe learning strategies.

*Learning from peers.* Having reviewed the personal lessons shared by study participants, it is equally important to understand the structured and unstructured processes by which these leaders learn to be successful. Arguably the most prevalent and enthusiastically advocated learning method described by interviewees was learning from other state-level board chairs. “I meet with my peers twice a year and I listen to the other state’s report. I’m impressed with so many of those other states” (Interview F). Board chairs were very supportive of the work of the NGA and the quality of the semiannual state-level board chair conferences. When asked what advice board chairs would give to a new peer, one participant remarked, “Come and meet with us. I always invite people to come to [my state]. Come and sit with us and we’ll tell you what our strengths and weaknesses are, if you’re new” (Interview F).
This open exchange of information among peers was seen not only as a successful way to share ideas but also as a way to measure the relative performance of state programs. “I’ve spent enough trips back east at the NGA and some other conferences, to realize and recognize the work that we’re doing here has been fairly successful—innovative in its own right” (Interview A).

Sharing information among peers should not be limited to peers within one’s own country. In describing best practices in apprenticeship programs, one chair stated, “We have a lot to learn from our European friends” (Interview F).

**Recognize transferrable skills.** Study participants reported the adaptation of transferable knowledge and skill as a useful strategy to improve success in the WFD context. Experience with community college and university systems was especially helpful, according to one board chair:

Having worked with the tech colleges gave me a very good foundation to understand how a university works. Now a university has some different wrinkles that a technical college doesn’t have, but there’s a lot of it that’s the same. So, having those relationships with different institutions, and having it be long enough to go through the budget cycles, and frankly go through a few crises and a few big wins—that all helps. You build relationships and allow things to get done more quickly and get better results. (Interview B)

Serving on a local WIB, or with one of the service agencies, was also mentioned as a viable way for a leader to gain practical awareness of this complicated, loosely coupled system:

So, coming up from that direction, I had a kind of understanding—not from an administrative or bureaucratic point of view but from a boots-on-the-ground [perspective]. That is what our people do in terms of service delivery. I think that having been grounded in that and having that understanding of where all these resources go, and what we are actually getting done. (Interview B)
First-person experience. For those board members who do not have transferrable knowledge and skills, the investment in localized meetings was deemed invaluable. Visiting locations that service America’s “second-chance citizens” (Gilot, 2004) evoked strong emotional connection among participants, as illustrated by this passage:

We went to [a city in our state], which is the home of five different prisons, all the way from super-max that has all the big name [criminals] in it . . . all the way down to the most minimum security. In a minimum security [prison] there are 53 different industries going on inside the prison, which is trying to get offenders trained so that when they come out [they] can be taxpaying citizens. We saw a group of younger men that were learning to make custom-made fly fishing rods. We saw guys were rebuilding tractors. There’s an entire tilapia fish farm on site! There’s also a call center—this is one that blew me away! (Interview A)

After describing how the customer call center operates in a prison environment, this interviewee went on to say, “That was probably one of the most compelling [example] for me to see, you know, nobody wants to think about being in prison, nobody wants to pay attention to [these] folks, but we’re doing a great job with their education and training” (Interview A).

Providing inmates with skills that can be parlayed into a lucrative career helps reduce the recidivism rate when individuals leave the penal system, according to the board chair. “So that these people—these offenders come out—there’s $40,000 to $50,000 a year jobs that they can apply for because they are now trained well in that” (Interview A).

Personal motivation. The following sections describe personal motivations.

The privilege of serving. Continuously learning during the tenure as a state-level WIB chair requires resilience and stamina. Balancing WFD duties with the responsibilities of a full-time career can be quite challenging. One interviewee joked about the amount of time he or she devoted to WFD efforts by saying, “I know a lot of companies that if their CEO spent as much time as I do outside the company, they’d probably be fired” (Interview B).
Despite the added responsibility, the WIB chairs interviewed for this study displayed gratitude for the opportunity to serve:

Well, for me personally, I have a full-time job . . . [describes job] . . . so, that keeps me busy, so making a little bit of the time [is a challenge], but you know, I feel passionate about it, so in that regard it’s kind of a privilege for me to help solve these problems. (Interview E)

As one participant shared, what started out as personal inquiry grew to be a commitment lasting decades in service to the citizens of the state:

The way I got involved with this in the first place was I took a look at our data 15 years ago and I looked at all the retirements that were going to be coming a few years down the road and I noticed how few people were going into the technical careers, and going for technical careers, and going for technical type degrees where I knew a lot of the work was going to be. I started looking at what the labor statistics were and I just realized what a big need we had and we weren’t meeting that challenge. (Interview E)

WFD makes a difference. Reflecting on their time volunteering in WFD, participants explained that being a witness to what a win can do to improve lives was inspiring. Having the tenacity to stay in the game long enough to cycle through economic ups and downs also improved leadership resiliency:

Experiencing some of the success in transforming a 300-person plant closing, and you put together a training center, and you go and deliver that. Your average wages were $13.50 an hour when they closed, and the average wage of a person that lost their job two years later is now $17—you know, that’s what we’re all about. I think having that opportunity to live through the ground game, so to speak—I think that’s really important. (Interview B)

In addition to observing the system turn around the fate of adult workers, board chairs were equally inspired by successes in preventing at-risk youth from becoming America’s second-chance citizens. The following passage describes the outcome of one experiential learning program for teenagers championed by a state WIB:

What the [programs] do is really engage those students in technology and entrepreneurship and we’re seeing those students that would have previously been
probably lost or dropouts becoming very engaged. They’re starting businesses, they’re getting fired up about manufacturing—it’s transformative. What it’s done is it’s generating a whole group of various successful students that were likely to have been dropouts, you know, 5 years ago or 10 years ago. (Interview B)

In the final analysis, study participants were able to take a long-term retrospective view of their contributions to the workforce in their state. On balance, this vantage provided them a sense of accomplishment and personal satisfaction, as this respondent noted:

I started out . . . helping to coordinate companies contributing their time and money to . . . build new facilities to prepare for the future. So, I guess that’s been a challenge, but it’s also been very rewarding. I’ve met with teachers and counselors across the state—I’ve met with the [underserved population], and talked about interviewing . . . about job opportunities, and we’ve been able to actually build some very nice [training] facilities that are run by our educational institutions. (Interview E)

**Summary for Research Question 2.** Through the interview process, board chairs had the opportunity to share a number of personal learnings acquired through their lived experience. Prominent among these lessons were the following:

- WFD problems are *wicked* problems.
- Pick your battles wisely.
- Keep your eye on the big picture.
- Honor the past but look to the future.
- Rely on your staff to manage administrative duties.
- Remember to let others shine.
- Be a collaborative leader.
- Listen closely when business speaks.
- Stay the course—this is a marathon, not a sprint.
- Put in the time to do it right.
As these leaders learned, WFD problems are complex and not amenable to short-term solutions. As such, addressing these problems requires taking the time to build relationships with a wide variety of stakeholders and listening to constituents’ concerns—especially those expressed by business leaders—to acquire a deep understanding of their short- and long-term needs.

The complexity of the problems and solutions means that no one person, organization, or entity has all the answers. It is imperative that stakeholder groups work together to resolve issues, generate new interpretations, and implement programs that achieve measurable results. Board chairs must display the reliance and tenacity to stay the course, as not every solution will be popular, and most will not be done overnight.

To be effective in this role, board chairs must adopt a lifestyle of continuous learning. Collaborating with and learning from their peers from other states were chief among the strategies progressive board chairs endorsed. To facilitate this learning orientation among other stakeholders, board chairs were the mindful architects of experiential learning opportunities, taking board members out into the field where they could learn firsthand what does, and does not, work in the WFD system.

WIB chairs leverage what, and whom, they already know to strengthen bonds, gain access, and advocate on behalf of the workforce system. In doing so, they take the time to pause and reflect on how far they have come in effecting change in their state—to shine a light on the success of others and to truly understand how the contributions of their boards have impacted their citizens. Maintaining a positive perspective in the midst of an ever-changing WFD landscape is a challenge. The next research question explored how these leaders perceive the impact of politics on their state systems.
Interview findings for Research Question 3. From their perspective, what impact does the political environment play in the state-level WIB chairs’ ability to effect change?

Politics, according to Alexander (2014), includes all the activities of cooperation, negotiation and conflict, within and between societies, whereby people go about organising the use, production or distribution of human natural or other resources in the course of the production and reproduction of their biological and social life. (p. 275)

In accordance with Alexander’s definition, WFD, and the role of the board chair in particular, is inherently political. Per the WIOA, WIBs act as the legitimate seat of authority by which the state establishes priorities and allocates limited training and support resources to its citizens. If there were any question about the political underpinnings of the role, the mandate for governors to appoint board chairs disabuses the notion that politics are not woven into the fabric of the state-level commission environment.

Each state operates within its own political microcosm, creating its own interpretation of priorities and standard practice. As one frequent participant of the NGA board chair association commented,

what really stands out is that [all the states are] different. The overall framework is the same—it’s an economic development framework, which is intended to equip our citizens with the skills for jobs that are coming available. But, all of these workforce systems are political organizations. And the politics of each state are different, and economic development of each state is different. (Interview C)

The interface of WFD and politics. According to participants, chief among the political activities occupying their time was the allocation of federal and state dollars. Fluctuations in financial support for WFD services year to year kept board chairs hypervigilant “to make sure that the overall mission and vision of . . . the combination of workforce, training, and education—that that triangle doesn’t get diluted or diffused based on changes in any of those environments” (Interview A).
The strategic focus and operational tactics of boards are, in part, defined by federal dollars. Some states receive significant federal budgets based on population, while for others, the financial support has been meager at times. In describing the motivation to launch a sector initiative, one respondent shared that he or she developed “a very successful sectors strategy . . . when our budgets went to almost zero” (Interview A).

**WIB chairs exhibit discomfort when describing political elements.** WIB chairs expressed discomfort when addressing issues that were blatantly political, feeling the need to apologize when making overtly political statements. For example, one board chair shared the following critique of the WFD organizational structure:

This may sound like a political statement in a political time, *so I apologize*, but when we have lifetime politicians driving policy and legislation—because it takes so long—having people that have run businesses and made a payroll—I think having them be at the forefront of your strategy will help move forward and move along workforce training and jobs, and how to create jobs much faster than if it’s done by the executive director of higher education. (Interview A)

In sharing a story about a polarizing shift in state policy for teacher compensation, another board chair shared,

We’re seeing some really significant changes in [K–12 education]. As a result of a lot of changes that were made—and this is probably *getting political and I don’t mean it to be*—but there were a lot of reforms that created a lot of savings by the state and that savings is being plowed back into education. So, as an example we saw some pretty significant improvements in the state budget. They’re proposing a $659 million budget increase in K–12 education in the next 2 years. (Interview B)

**Politics as a facilitator for WFD goals.** Although study subjects displayed an uneasiness with political praxis, they were appreciative of the benefits afforded by the judicious application of political influence to achieve the WFD mission. In retelling of the genesis of the state industry sector program, one board chair illustrated how the power of political connections was effectively applied to engage business leaders:
So, what we ended up doing was going to the local mayors and saying “you carry a great influence in your local community. Would you make the call on behalf of the workforce development council—all of which are appointed by the governor—and ask these [business] leaders to come in for at least half a day to the front end of [the sector meeting]? After that, if they need to delegate this down to some other person, they can.” And so, we got various high-level elected government [officials] involved asking C-level groups to just come in for half a day, even though the program was a day and a half. We thought we could sell them early into the program, and . . . fast-forward, we wanted 100 [business leaders]—we got 425 people in the first year! (Interview A)

When asked to explain how the local elected officials motivated business leaders to engage in the WFD sector workshops, the participant explained, “The mayor said ‘Johnny from ABC Technologies is going to be there—you’re really in his same sweet spot—you should be there too’—it almost became a little bit of a ‘you’re guilty by your absence’” (Interview A).

Being close to the local community and the leadership group, mayors were able to effectively motivate their business leaders to act. Council leaders encouraged and supported local elected officials in hosting meetings by “always having the mayor of the local city or county commissioner come and welcome the council to their area. We encourage that, and give them, each host, some money to give them a trinket of some kind so when I leave [a city] I leave with something unique to [that location]” (Interview A).

At the state level, board chairs frequently commented on the contributions made by proactive governors and cabinet officers. One interviewee shared that the concept of meeting tours was modeled on the action of their state’s chief executive:

When [the governor] was first elected, [they] went around—they called it a blueprint for success. [They] literally went to every county in like 100 days and was just a workhorse really listening to people. [They] came up with the top industries and then came up with the top challenges for those industries. So, we tried to move our meetings around, we always hold our meeting around. (Interview A)
Visible support of WFD by the governor’s office attributed to much of the success of progressive states, according to study participants. Governor’s active engagement is vital to developing sustainable solutions. Illustrating this type of support, one interviewee noted,

We have states that have gone to Europe to study their [apprenticeship] programs. [A delegation from this state] went to Switzerland and took their governor, by the way . . . very impressed with that. The governor went and spent three or four days in Switzerland with a huge team of workforce people to find out why their apprenticeship programs work so well. (Interview F)

Participation in WFD was also seen as a way to foster engagement in the political process by private citizens. One board chair was pleased to share that two members of the private sector became trusted advisors to state leadership as a direct result of their contributions on the commission. “Now we have two different industry lead champions that came out of the [sectors program] that are direct appointees for the governor now in different areas—[they] didn’t even know the governor before they started through the sectors piece!” (Interview A).

In states experiencing brain drain, the involvement of the governor was of critical importance. In one state, the support from the governor was reported to be direct and personal:

If someone tips us off that this individual is a youth [from our state] that is now working in a different state . . . the governor will send a letter to that youth inviting them back to [our state] and showing them the jobs that are available . . . to them to move back. (Interview D)

The genesis of the reintegration program illustrated the significance of listening to constituents’ concerns and embracing new ways to address wicked problems:

[We] continued to hear the council, and the entire state, and the governor, and everyone say that we were losing our youth and our workforce to [other states]. Our aged workers are getting to the point where they’re going to be retiring and we don’t have our youth to replace them, and it’s been an issue we’ve been faced with for years. [An employee with state government] just kind of came up with the idea of
“why don’t we do something like this,” so we grabbed hold of it and helped [them] mold and model what [their] ideas were, and it’s been very successful. (Interview D)

Board chairs also shared the importance of the governor’s office in rapid-response situations. Mass downsizing sends ripples of anxiety through communities, and special teams are deployed to support workers:

Within 2 days [after a major layoff event] we instantly came together and came up with some ideas. Got the governor’s office and the state officials throughout employment opportunities for those laid off . . . to stay in [our state]. Go to work in our prisons, you can go to work in our highway department—transportation had some openings. So, we were able to go instantly get these job opportunities out to the unemployed workers that were temporarily laid off. (Interview D)

In addition to responding to short-term, rapid-response situations, elected officials created policies and processes that facilitate sustainable business engagement, according to board chairs. In one state, the legislature enacted fiscal support policies that reduced public expenditure and ensured that the private sector engaged sustainably:

Typically, the way it works with our state legislature is—if they do kick in funds, for say apprenticeships or other programs, it typically requires a match from industry. So, say if there’s a workforce development grant out there that comes from the state to say, our 2-year institutions, who train up a lot of our 2-year programs, they will make money available but they are contingent upon matching funds from industry. (Interview E)

Politics as an inhibitor of WFD goals. While the political process can be a force to advance WFD efforts, dysfunctional political environments can impede the WFD progress. In one example offered by a study respondent, strong executive leadership was needed to overcome infighting among stakeholders:

To his credit, you know [our governor] flipped the whole model on its head. Where before it was the entities that I mentioned that were public employees were driving strategy and in the end, it never moved fast enough. Politics got in the way. There was a fight for money and so he flipped it on its head and said “we’re going to disband this whole concept and we’re going to make it business led.” And then the governance was written in such a way that all the decisions had to be with all the
voting members on the business side... [business] had to drive the initiatives—drive the mission. (Interview A)

Obtaining and maintaining the attention of governors was perceived by some interviewees to be a perennial concern. “You know, they’ve got a lot going on—they have a lot of conflicting things that they’re addressing, so being coordinated in what we see in the council and the things they’re working on can be a challenge” (Interview E). In the absence of this visibility, the ability of the council to establish the cooperation and coordination needed to make the system effective is significantly hampered. “I think one of the biggest challenges is staying coordinated with probably the legislature and the governor’s office” stated one study subject (Interview E).

Board chairs engaged with the NGA gained valuable perspective about collaboration, or lack thereof, of the legislative and executive branches of government of their own states relative to other locales:

We participate in a National Governors Association convening of the workforce board chairs, and it seems like some states aren’t quite there. They don’t receive the kind of support that you would expect. If you’ve got somebody that’s not on the same page that makes it a lot tougher to have a robust delivery system. Instead of all paddling together you’ve got some folks going in different directions and that can be real challenging. (Interview B)

In another state, the chair shared that building a stronger, sustained relationship with the governor’s office was a high priority for this strategic planning cycle. Breaking down the barriers and conducting authentic “heart-to-heart” conversations about the realities of the WFD system are needed to be successful in the mid to long-term, according to this board chair:

We’ve got to do a better job getting [the governor’s] attention. [The governor] has other priorities—I’m not sure we’re one of them. Now [they] don’t throw up roadblocks, but engagement is so critical. Some states call their workforce boards the “Governor’s Workforce Board.” That would be a stretch for us, and I wish we could
come the point where they’re willing to let us say that, because if you say that then people’s ears perk up, as you can imagine. More people are [likely to] be more willing to engage or be part of the whole system, if they feel that the governor’s stamp of approval is one the whole system. (Interview F)

In response to this lack of executive sponsorship in this state, the legislature just set up a new task force to study the workforce system, and it’s very political. . . . We’re not on the list to be talked to—or to testify, or to be part of the process. To me that says that they don’t really know much about what we’re doing. They may know but maybe they’re trying to do an end run to get around us. . . . That’s very disconcerting. (Interview F)

Another area in which frustration with elected officials emerged was recounted in the appointment of private-sector leaders to councils. The collaborative spirit, business acumen, and leadership skill of board appointees were seen as critical to the success of the WFD commission according to all study participants. As political appointees, elected officials maintain a great deal of power in establishing board makeup, which in turn affects the direction and effectiveness of the system:

A bigger challenge is that these are gubernatorial appointments—we have something in [our state] that is called senatorial courtesy, so any person who is nominated from wherever he or she lives, the senator or senators who cover the district, that cover that county, or part of that county, we extend the senatorial courtesy. So, there have been a couple of times when a really, really awesome person has been identified and nominated by the governor’s office and then, for some reason, a senator from the county would say no and would not sign off on the appointment. And that’s for lots of reasons. . . . One, they may not like that person for some reason, two, they may have their own person that they want to put on the commission. (Interview C)

Understanding the political landscape and the propensity for the legislature, governor’s office, and partner agencies to collaborate and achieve positive WFD outcomes was seen as an essential conversation to be had by a newly appointed board chair:

Oftentimes some of the challenges we face are with legislators and with administrative folks—or folks within the administration. I think one of the things I’d suggest before someone took this on is have a discussion with those folks. If they’re accessible, you know the governor and the leaders in the state house with whoever is responsible for the delivery of the services whether it’s—in our case, the Department
of Workforce Development. Make sure that those folks are collaborative and on the same page. (Interview B)

Political struggles were not limited to elected officials and career bureaucrats, according to study participants. Disagreements can crop up between stakeholder groups and, at times, even between factions of the same organization. One leader provided an example of how the struggle to clearly define an organization’s mission as it relates to WFD can create challenges that manifest in a variety of ways:

There’s still a lot of what I would call the “mission” of the community college system plays in preparing someone for an associate degree and transfer to a four-year college. That [mission] has been instilled in [the state] for the last 30 years, or whatever. So, we have to turn that around. The primary mission of the community college is to serve the workforce needs for the region that the community college serves. So that’s a big change. (Interview C)

WFD commission chairs in this study described a capricious political environment, where power shifts and system outcomes can be attributed in large part to the quality of the relationships among the various players. Dancing to this complex choreography seems to epitomize the metaphoric “waltz with a monster” described by Shinn (2007): “So, it’s a complex political process as well. I’d say that’s a bigger challenge than actually finding people who want to serve and who have the policy orientation to serve” (Interview C).

**Summary for Research Question 3.** According to Alexander (2014), politics involves cooperation, negotiation, and conflict, whereby societies decide the distribution of resources among citizens. With this definition in mind, the role of the WIB chair is inherently political, and yet, within their narratives board chairs felt the need to “apologize” when framing discussions in political terms.

The duality that the political landscape plays in successful WFD was evident in the stories participants shared. Political power, when used properly, was a valuable asset in
mobilizing people to form solid, stable coalitions and effective regimes. The most sought after political allies of WIB chairs were local mayors and state governors. Soliciting the help of elected officials to endorse WFD initiatives can make the difference between success and mediocrity, according to interviewees. That said, participants were quick to describe the darker side of the political landscape and the effect it can have in stalling progress, especially when it comes to appointments to state boards.

At the national level, the politics involved in the newly enacted WIOA legislation was critiqued for perpetuating the one-size-fits-all philosophy that creates compliance challenges at the state level. Research Question 4 investigated WIB chairs’ perspectives of the impact of WIOA on their state programs.

**Interview findings for Research Question 4. How do state-level WIB chairs envision the role WIOA plays in shaping future workforce strategies in their respective states?**

**Introduction to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).** The WIOA is landmark legislation designed to strengthen and improve the nation’s public workforce system and help Americans, including youth and those with barriers to employment, into high-quality jobs and careers as well as support employers in hiring and training skilled workers.

While enacted in 2014, many of the new requirements under this federal regulation are just taking effect, placing the nation’s WFD system in a state of transition. When asked about how this legislation has affected their state, one interviewee noted,

You know it’s been a challenge. Any change is a challenge, but now that we’ve gotten in, and by no means do I understand the entire law, and I don’t think it’s my position to do that—I have people who do that at the department—that’s their job.
But I do see what they were trying to do, with the lawmakers and the Department of Labor, to get this to be more of a private sector–driven program and effort, rather than . . . government run. (Interview D)

Placing the private sector in the proverbial driver’s seat shifts the focus from a provider-driven system to an employer-focused program. To what degree this shift affects state WFD strategy depends, in large part, on the direction states were taking under the now retired WIA legislation. As one progressive state chair described this shift,

I will say that my initial impressions of the changes I’ve seen from WIA to WIOA is that there’s a general recognition that in the newer program is the important role that industry plays. In fact, I think in some of the programs they require at least a 50% industry involvement. So, we were already there. I mean, we had been heavily emphasizing and been successful in partnering between our state institutions and the legislature and our businesses. (Interview E)

*Shifting strategic direction.* Other study participants were quite vocal about maintaining their strategic direction, despite new regulatory requirements:

You know, I will tell you that I was pretty adamant about *not* shifting gears on our picture of success. Rather than adjusting our—obviously, you have to adjust it to a certain level because it’s regulated—but we have set our goals, our mission, our forward-thinking view of what success looks like is not changing. And what do we need to do internal to our current processes to turn off the switch of the old legislation and turn on the new switch without losing sight of what we think is a pretty good mission and vision. Is it affecting us, yes, like everybody else, but it’s not formulaically changing what our definition of success is. (Interview A)

As noted below, progressive leaders exhibit confidence in the direction of their programs and alignment with the intent of the new law. “I would say we know where we needed to go, and WIOA just gave us a better path to get [there]” (Interview C).

I think we were moving in a way that was broadly consistent with what WIOA required. I don’t know if they modeled it after states that were being successful, but a lot of the requirements for what the performance looks like—we already have in place in [our state]. (Interview B)

Another interviewee shared the following thoughts about the impact that WIOA legislation would likely have on his or her board:
For example, we’ve been working on expanding sectors a long time, and we know [what] those are, we have a really, really strong labor analytics division within the Department of Labor and course development. So, the data is very powerful in terms of what industries are creating jobs and what industries are losing jobs. (Interview C)

Other interviewees mirrored these comments, stating that “we’re not getting bogged down with the new WIOA law and letting that stop our efforts to continue to train and retrain our workforce” (Interview D). This board chair went on to say that the state was moving forward with the economic diversification strategy previously championed by the governor. As always, the biggest challenge for WFD is “to see what’s coming down the road for the workforce” (Interview D).

*Actions taken to date.* The confidence reported by study participants is possible because, according to interviewees, many initiatives, programs, and organizational structures that comply with the law were already in progress or just recently completed. As one board chair explained,

> We first had to come up with our 5-year plan. I’m just so proud of the work that we did there and the outcome of the plan that we have approved. And, not only that, but the process that we used, we recognized that WIOA implementation opportunity and the 5-year plan that we submitted was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to get all the right people engaged around the table. (Interview C)

The collaborative process used to formulate the state’s strategic plan was a source of pride for this WFD leader. It was not the quality or cohesiveness of the document that was noteworthy “as much as the collaborations and relationships and the culture that we developed as the result of working together” (Interview C). In the final analysis, the group came together and came up with a strategy that made sense for their community.

Another board chair gave praise to the positive, enduring relationships created through the strategic planning process:
All of higher education, private nonprofits, public institutions, technical colleges, Department of Public Instruction—which is our K–12 system—employers, manufacturers—they’re all working this common objective of where does [the state] need to go in the next 10 to 20 years. (Interview B)

The strategic planning requirement of WIOA has helped boards focus on the future and create operational directives that propel states to their desired future:

We’ve got 21 individual initiatives that range anywhere from, say, early childhood development is one, or increasing access to the workforce system is another. It’s a broad range of individual action items that . . . fall under those four main categories. (Interview B)

According to the board chair, the commission worked for a year developing their first strategic plan under the new legislation. The current plan, with 21 individual initiatives, will take the state through the end of 2018, at which time they will begin the planning process again. The cyclical nature of the process allows for mission continuity should there be fluctuations in council membership over time. For their state, the four most important areas for improvement included “talent development, attraction and retention is one category, education and talent development is another, we’ve got the development of sustainable partners, and then we have alignment of workforce programs” (Interview B).

Future of WFD under WIOA. In general, interviewees noted their support of the new WIOA. “I congratulated [the assistant secretary of employment] just as [they] left office. I thought it was a great feather in their cap—the bill is workable!” (Interview F).

The NGA participated in the development of the act, according to one participant, explaining the overall satisfaction with the outcome. There are, however, some concerns with the new bill, especially from state board chairs from smaller, less populated states. In describing these concerns, one participant stated, “I think there was a lot lost in translation.
Because we’re a [unique] state. So, there’s so many things that when they were looking at the big picture of [a more typical] state, that is what the law was written for” (Interview D).

In addition to having some bias toward larger states, another frequently mentioned issue with the law is the bureaucracy in funding at the state level. As one interviewee noted, one of the things that the newer program gets away from a little bit is, I think, in the past some of the monies had an awful lot of strings attached to them, you know. They had to be people below a certain income—they had to be disadvantaged this, or disadvantaged that—and it really tied your hands at the state, for one size fits all. They don’t necessarily know what our needs are—and how to go about best serving those needs. So, I understand that—the philosophy behind doing that—but in terms of it being workable—it’s going to work at the state level, I think the newer program recognizes this a bit better. (Interview E)

That said, according to board chairs, there is still room for improvement:

There’s a lot of good in the act and we had committees working to make sure it was headed in the right direction as it was being authorized. But again, we’re dealing with one size fits all and we’ve got to make sure that the states have the authority to use the money as they see fit. We just need to make it more workable and the key is flexibility. (Interview F)

The NASWBC plans to continue lobbying with the Labor Department for greater flexibility for funding at the state level, according to one interviewee (Interview F).

In describing the impact the law has on supporting apprenticeships, the board chair went on to say, “I don’t see a big change there, other than there’s more emphasis on it’’ (Interview E). Providing more support and funding for apprenticeships will help spark interest in this classic WFD strategy among business leaders, according to this interviewee:

We need to get ahold of this new [Trump administration] Labor Department hierarchy and tell them that. That is challenge number one. We prepared a paper, I say “we” under the auspices of the National Governors Association. They prepared a paper for the administration—the one that goes to the new secretary of labor. And again, pleading with them to give us flexibility when it comes to money. You know, it’s almost the old “block grant” approach. Get away from prescriptive federal grant requirements. (Interview F)
In addition to offering less flexibility at the state level than WIB chairs deem necessary, WIOA also follows the same funding strategy based on state population as did the older WIA regulation. For less densely populated states, this still presents a challenge. “The Catch 22 under the new WIOA is that they’re requiring us to do things with funding that we do not have in [our state]” (Interview D).

Despite challenges with the new regulation, board chairs remain positive about the impact the legislation will have on the system as a whole:

I think that there’ll be an impact. Again, the reemphasis on apprenticeship and preapprenticeship training is a good example of that. The demand for better alignment of our programs and resources as they provide the funding is a reminder to us that we have to work on better alignment with the education and economic folks to get the job done. So, there are some very good, positive aspects to WIOA. (Interview F)

The reemphasis on apprenticeship programs found in WIOA is another positive element, according to interviewees. “I think in WIOA there’s more of an emphasis in [apprenticeship], so I see this as kind of a step forward” (Interview E).

Study participants were positive about the new regulation and what it has to offer for the citizens of their states. Under the new law, businesses and boards themselves have more authority to move the ball forward on WFD issues. This optimism was reflected in the following commentary:

Well, I think it’s been a breath of fresh air. We’ve had a little bit of resistance from the Department of Workforce Services about letting go of some of their responsibilities and having the council come in and be more of an oversight and authority than when we were under WIA. We were more of just a functioning council that tried to get some stuff done, but we didn’t have the authority to do so. (Interview D)

**Summary for Research Question 4.** The signing of the long-awaited WIOA in June 2014 marked the end of WIA and propelled WFD nationally along a path that progressive states had, for the most part, already forged (Interview E). Working collaboratively under the
auspices of the NGA, state board chairs acted as advisors to the author of this new legislation, and in doing so, the bill that passed Congress is generally representative of the collective needs of state boards. Described as a “breath of fresh air,” the legislation bears the mark of board chairs in the following areas: (a) more control and oversight by business leaders, (b) slightly less bureaucratic burden for addressing funding issues, (c) greater emphasis on apprenticeship programs, (d) focus on collaborative strategic planning cycles, and (e) great emphasis on serving clients in traditionally unserved populations.

At the time of its enactment in 2014, the bill was praised for receiving bicameral and bipartisan support, a rarity in the polarized political environment of the Obama administration. Elements of the program appeal to both major political parties, making it a true political victory and providing an important framework for modernizing America’s WFD system.

With that said, interviewees were very forthcoming describing some of the more problematic issues with the regulation. Not surprisingly, the basic issue many leaders continue to have deals with financing. First, WIOA follows the same population-based strategy that was used with WIA. For some states, there is very little federal funding available to supply services, even for those with barriers to successful employment.

Second, arguably the more prevalent concern are the constraints placed on state from the federal government for the use of funding. As most chairs described, WFD personnel, local boards, and even state board members are closer to their own situation and feel they would be a better judge of how monies should be spent “where the rubber meets the road” (Interview E).
Working collaboratively with other state board chairs, state governors, and professional staff at the NGA, interviewees described their ongoing efforts to enhance WIOA moving forward. As one board chair described, a literal interpretation of the law as written may not be workable in each state: Continuing dialog and interpretation are needed—no one has the answers, and we need to figure this out together (Interview D; Interview F).

**Supplemental Data Findings**

To improve the trustworthiness of the study (Yin, 2014), data were collected from two sources in addition to the semistructured interviews described previously.

**Questionnaire data.** The concept of collaboration, both as a leadership competency (Crosby & Bryson, 2005a, 2005b) and as a structural element of the WFD system (Ansell & Gash, 2007; Page, 2010; Sun & Anderson, 2012), undergirds this study’s theoretical framework. Chrislip and Larson (1994) identified two key features common to highly effective collaborations. The first element was the transparency of the process used to establish and nourish the collaborative. The second key element essential to a strong collaboration was credibility and authenticity—maintaining a fair and open process where all parties feel their contributions to the vision and mission have been considered.

The “Working Together” survey developed by Chrislip and Larsen provided an advance organizer for study participants (Lagerwerf, Cornelis, de Geus, & Jansen, 2008), offering a focal point for key factors leading to successful collaborations. Survey participants unanimously responded in full agreement with the following survey statements:

- Now is a good time to address the issues about which we are collaborating.
- Our membership is not dominated by any one group or sector.
• Our collaboration is organized in working subgroups when necessary to attend to key performance areas.

Survey items soliciting the most variable, and least favorable, responses from WFD board chairs included the following:

• Those who are in positions of power or authority are willing to go along with our decisions or recommendations.

• We set aside vested interests to achieve our common goal.

• We have identified interim goals to maintain the group’s momentum.

• There is an established method for monitoring performance and providing feedback on goal attainment.

All other survey questions returned positive results from survey participants. Given both the concerns and accolades obtained during the semistructured interviews, the survey results generally support data collected in narrative form. Specifically, survey results echo WFD board chairs’ belief in the importance of the work done by state-level commissions and that these groups create flexible work structures to meet the worthwhile goals established for the state WFD system. Likewise, board chairs recognize the importance of fair and equitable distribution of council seat appointments among the stakeholder community.

Board chairs were open and very willing to share areas that needed improvement or their personal frustration throughout the interview narratives. The survey questions that generated the least positive responses echo these same concerns. “Oftentimes some of the challenges we face are with legislators and with administrative folks—or folks within the administration” (Interview B). The relative support of the governor’s office or other governmental agencies was reported by many interviewees as a concern. The survey showed
a similar concern for the acceptance of board decisions by those in “a position of power or authority.”

Additionally, interview narratives revealed that board chairs consciously focus on guiding stakeholders to look beyond their own interests and seek to devise policies that improve the system as a whole. “It’s about trying to get people to step back from their own protective instincts of, not only their initiatives, but their budgets” (Interview A). This ideal of putting aside personal gain for the common good is mirrored in the “Working Together” survey data.

**Public records review.** To provide additional data and corroborate comments made by interviewees, public documents generated by the state-level WIBs were reviewed. All the states participating in the study had published Web sites that included vital data about the work of the state-level commission as a primary communication tool providing public access to board activities.

Web sites were accessed via the Google search engine using the search term “[STATE] workforce development board.” Findings from the Web search are found in Table 6.

The review of public records from the state boards participating in the study confirmed the programs and strategies described by board chairs during personal interviews. Web sites were generally easy to locate and differentiated from local WFD boards in a Google search. With the exception of one state, all Web sites contained up-to-date information, allowing for transparency of the process of both the full committee and specific task groups and subcommittees.
Table 6

**State Workforce Development Board Web Site Review**

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<tr>
<th>Web site attribute</th>
<th>Interview A</th>
<th>Interview B</th>
<th>Interview C</th>
<th>Interview D</th>
<th>Interview E</th>
<th>Interview F</th>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reports and plans available</td>
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<td>Minutes confirm past strategy of rotating meeting locations.</td>
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<td>Minutes confirm the strategy of rotating meeting locations.</td>
<td>No information posted for 2017.</td>
<td>Minutes reflect intention to rotate meeting location for future events.</td>
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A review of meeting minutes revealed the standard practice of recording presentations and decisions made during events. As corroborating evidence, minutes confirmed interviewee comments but lacked the nuance and complexity of leadership needed to achieve the outcomes, as reported through the interview process.

Nonetheless, the official record review illustrated the commitment state-level boards exhibit in maintaining open, equitable, and democratic business processes needed to create and strengthen effective collaboration (Ansell & Gash, 2007; Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Crosby & Bryson, 2005a, 2005b; Page, 2010; Sun & Anderson, 2012).

**Synthesis of Findings**

Board chair narratives provide multiple first-person experiences consistent with the tenets of collaborative leadership and regime theory. As integrative leaders, these individuals demonstrate key competencies to frame agendas and structure debate, inspire others, encourage the support of institutions, and share power among the stakeholder community through masterful and timely application of dynamic organizational structures.

In their legitimate position of authority, board chairs actively created time and space to convene stakeholders, facilitating face-to-face dialog and ensuring fidelity with democratic processes through the use of public forums. By creating and clearly articulating the mission and vision of success, board chairs drove stakeholders toward a shared understanding of issues, opportunities, and solutions.

Board chairs readily accepted the fluid nature of member participation and devised ways to create meaningful, positive interactions among the stakeholder communities. The connections fostered by these interactions transcended the tenure of individual players. These leaders demonstrated a high degree of situational awareness, taking the time to understand
historical realities that helped shape the wicked problem of WFD among disadvantaged populations.

Table 7 illustrates the relationship and confluence of integrative leadership and regime theory emerging from the experience of state-level WIB chairs.

Table 7

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<td>Structure debate</td>
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<td>Inspire others</td>
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*Note. ILT = integrative leadership theory; RT = regime theory.*

**Integrative leadership theory.** Ansell and Gash (2007) posited that collaborative governance is achieved through the mindful design of institutional structure, coupled with mastery of facilitative leadership skills. Many state-level board chairs described the practice of moving the location of board meetings throughout the state, regardless of the challenge this places on the team to manage meeting logistics and accommodate travel time. Institutionalizing this practice provided board members with authentic, first-person experience of conditions in the field, inspiring the membership to continue volunteering their time and talent to the WFD cause. In addition, this practice was credited with encouraging
the support of business leaders and local politicians, sharing the ownership for WFD with the local community.

**Integrative leaders frame the agenda and structure debate.** The institutional practice and personal dedication to conduct board meetings in local venues also provided state board chairs with an opportunity to frame the agenda and structure debate around specific issues. According to Page (2010), achieving these objectives is fundamental to the tenets of integrative leadership.

In addition, integrative leaders are often called upon to provide a voice for the disadvantaged, according to Van Wart (2013a). As one board chair shared, “you usually have challenges and underserved populations—really understanding what that is, [and] staying focused on that” (Interview E) was greatly facilitated by the institutionalization of the touring meeting venues.

Observing how positive WFD policy implementation can impact the lives of incarcerated Americans, one interviewee stated it was “the most compelling [site visit] for me to see . . . nobody wants to think about being in prison, nobody wants to pay attention to those folks, but we’re doing a great job with their education and training—bringing them out . . . of those prisons and mak[ing] them successful” (Interview A).

As Page (2010) pointed out, the practice of highlighting an issue, or part of an issue, legitimizes the concern and makes it worthy of joint problem solving and policy intervention. By “showcasing” (Interview E) different underserved populations during face-to-face council meetings, and creating the opportunity for members to receive authentic experience of conditions in the field, board chairs help illuminate issues and concerns that might not be elevated into public discourse:
One of the things that I’ve done which has been probably different than most places—I’ve taken the lead in showcasing different industries, areas of need, and I’ve been doing this for years. So, for example, even though a portion of our quarterly meetings is held with going over all the agency reports, and different statistics and, kind of, all the different departments reports on their progress with things—on jobs, on workforce development. (Interview E)

**Integrative leaders encourage support.** Board chairs were quick to acknowledge their role as the arbiter of support from executive leadership:

Successful partnership with cabinet level people with, for example, the commissioner so that, [while] you may not be working closely with the governor, you’re working closely with [his or her] cabinet and . . . staff. The chair has to be at the forefront of that, and [be] the leader in all of that . . . that makes for success. (Interview F)

Those interviewees who described having such support were quite appreciative of how this connection benefited the citizens of their states. “The governor, who is now in [his or her] second term, has really carried [the policy of a business-led council] forward. I think that’s probably [one of] the biggest things that has made it successful” (Interview A). In establishing agendas and priorities for the council, one board chair described planning as much as a year in advance to “bring in people, either on the legislature or the governor’s office—sometimes they’re hard to get, but if we can, we bring them in” (Interview E).

One area that I think we’ve been successful is convincing the governor that [he or she has] to help us—if [not personally] directly involved, then [he or she needs] to get [the] commissioners of education, even transportation, and certainly economic development, certainly health and human services to work more closely with us, and to take a hard look at the training funds they get from the federal government which is in the millions of dollars. Coordinate their programs with us and be part of our effort—be part of our workforce board system. (Interview F)

For board chairs who did not feel they had the support of the governor’s office or cabinet officials, soliciting this support was described as a high-priority issue:

The governor has other priorities—and I’m not sure we’re one of them. Some states call their workforce boards the “Governor’s Workforce Board.” That would be a stretch for us and I wish we could come to the point where [the governor is] willing to let us say that. (Interview F)
The interviewee went on to say, “I’ve got to break down [the governor’s] door and really have a heart-to-heart talk with [him or her] about this . . . so that’s a priority.”

Securing and maintaining this type of support has both short-term and long-term benefits for the WFD system. When reaching out to WFD stakeholders, the sheer mention of the governor’s name will make “people’s ears perk up” (Interview F). “People are . . . more willing to engage or be part of the whole system if they feel that the governor’s stamp of approval is on the whole system” (Interview F).

**Integrative leaders foster equitable distribution of resources.** State-level WFD board chairs interviewed in this study were clear about their responsibility to represent the interests of all citizens in a fair and equitable manner. “One of the things [of importance] is we represent the whole state” (Interview A). This commitment to egalitarian commission processes manifested in the practice of touring different local communities, according to one board chair.

Additionally, board chairs were adamant about having fair and balanced representation on the council itself. “We really work to have all sectors [represented]. Labor and manufacturing and research and higher ed[ucation]—everybody’s at the table” (Interview B).

Sun and Anderson (2012) posited that integrative leaders learn to toggle between the transactional and transformation aspects of their leadership role with ease, as situations change. As part of the administrative duties described by board chairs, financial oversight was touted as an effective means to ensure the fair and equitable distribution of funds in a way that produced positive outcomes for citizens. “The first thing that popped into my head
is our oversight of the [local] workforce development boards, and the work we have done to make them far, far, far more accountable to the public” (Interview C).

**Integrative leaders share the leadership role.** According to Sun and Anderson (2012), collaborative leaders come to the planning table with a bank of social capital and a willingness to share power freely to achieve objectives. Study participants described a variety of situations where they freely shared, and openly encouraged the sharing of, leadership within the WFD space. The hosting opportunities for touring meetings were just one example where board chairs created a platform for the local mayor or city and county commissioners not only to share the success in their WFD efforts but also to have direct access to state commission members for venting frustrations, or as one interviewee said, “the good, the bad, and the ugly . . . of their job scenario” (Interview A).

Board chairs also gave high praise to the leadership of their commission members on achieving the goals of various task groups and subcommittees. As an example:

we had a really good planning subcommittee. So, they’re very good, but we also connected with the leaders of the K–12, Health and Human Services, Department of Corrections, you know—others in this state who under WIOA legislation had a very significant role to play. (Interview C)

Board chairs also reported designing structures that support, if not enforce, shared leadership among stakeholder groups. In one state, program subsidies are tied to matching donations from the business community:

We do have “skin in the game” and it’s actually been very successful. You know, matching funds may not just include cash but it’s also equipment. The other thing you’re getting when you do that—you get exactly what industry needs, because they’re the ones who are going to be putting up the money to say, “This is what I need.” We then have very willing partners with our educational institutions and our 2-year institutions. (Interview E)
**Integrative leaders inspire others.** All board chairs interviewed shared strategies for inspiring members toward peak performance. From a structural perspective, quickly assigning new members to task groups and subcommittees to harness their talent and booster their energy was reported as a common tactic. “I try to keep people moving inside the organization—keep their energy up” (Interview A).

Chairs reported that they consistently monitored board member engagement and reassigned individuals as needed to achieve positive results. Leaders took the time to understand and tap into the personal interests of participants, making committee assignments that facilitated intrinsic motivations of members, resulting in optimal outcomes. As one board chair stated, “find[ing] out what their interests are, and find[ing] ways to make them successful” were key to sustaining board member participation in committee initiatives (Interview A).

Another tactic commonly reported for maintaining enthusiasm among the stakeholder community was sharing stories of citizens who have been helped by the system. “We take at least four stories that are great success stories in the local community that our meeting is being held in and talk about the different people that are being successful” (Interview A). Providing a name and a face to the narrative of success was reported to motivate volunteer board members to continue their efforts.

**Shared attributes between integrative leadership theory and regime theory.** Integrative leadership theory and regime theory share the concept of collaboration as both a leadership competency and a system of organizational structures and norms that work together to achieve complex outcomes. Attributes common to these two theoretical planes are (a) the commitment to convene stakeholders in face-to-face dialog, (b) effectively managing
activities to secure results through transparent processes, (c) driving stakeholders to common understanding of issues, as well as (d) an unequivocal definition of the mission and vision of the organization. State WFD board chairs exhibited these attributes in a multitude of ways.

**Board chairs convene stakeholders for face-to-face dialog.** Study participants shared the degree to which they went to convene the right stakeholders, bringing thought leaders to the table to investigate, devise, debate, and implement WFD initiatives (Interview C). According to Wile (2014b), the dedication they display to schedule these face-to-face interactions in local venues creates a shared space that breaks down barriers and brings about meaningful change. While this business practice requires stakeholders to drive, in some instances, hundreds of miles to attend touring meetings, the benefits they gain from these personal encounters are well worth the effort (Interview C).

As Dent (2008) suggested, the result of every positive and successful interaction achieved by personal contact, no matter how limited in scope, sets the stage for future success. Investing the time and effort in a touring meeting program reaps positive dividends that extend beyond the stated business outcome of council meetings.

**Board chairs drive shared understandings.** In addition to establishing the practice of touring council meetings, study participants reported the time and attention devoted to creating a common language between the different members of the stakeholder community. “If you listen to an academic and you listen to a manufacturer and you put the two in the same room it’s almost like they’re not talking the same language” (Interview B).

Although stakeholder groups may use the same words, the words often portray different meanings within the stakeholder-specific context. Leveling misalignment in communications was reported as a significant challenge, according to interviewees. “That’s
been one of our bigger challenges, but by doing something as simple as having those meetings, and getting down to a 1:1 meeting—we encourage a lot of that, and that’s been happening a lot” (Interview B).

As one interviewee reported, the workforce council had encouraged one-on-one meetings between the president of the state’s university system and business leaders. Personal meetings with business leaders and university officials resulted in better understanding and alignment of higher education programs with emerging industry needs.

**Board chairs manage for results.** Interviewees described the fundamental role that they play in overseeing the effective and efficient use of public resources in the management of the WFD system. One board chair noted that he or she has a designated team focused on managing program efficiencies: “There’s a group that works on making those partnerships effective, or essentially connecting the dots” (Interview B). This effectiveness team was in addition to a team dedicated to prospecting and initiating partner relationships.

As private business leaders, WFD board chairs are accustomed to managing for timely results and carry this skill set to the complex WFD ecosystem. “I’ve seen both [business lead and government lead] and there’s a marked difference between actually getting things done and *talking* about getting things done” (Interview A).

**Board chairs ensure process transparency and fidelity.** Establishing open, transparent, and democratic processes for debate and decision making in WFD at the state level was reported as a key indicator for success, according to study participants. “We’ve got essentially all public university system, private nonprofit colleges, technical college system, K12, economic development, workforce development—all these folks are at the table on a regular basis—all with a voice for collaborating” (Interview B).
Page (2010) and Wallner (2008) both pointed to open, balanced, and democratic processes in developing public policy as a strong predictor for political acceptance and resource approvals. As WFD board chair narratives described, leaders often went directly to politicians to garner their support by providing them an opportunity to host meetings. This open and direct platform from which political leaders voiced concerns and shared successes provided additional avenues for long-term support of WFD goals and initiatives.

**Board chairs create a clear mission and vision.** Establishing a clear vision of what the state-level WFD system will be requires strong leadership from board chairs, according to interviewees. “I do think what it takes is somebody that can describe what success looks like 5 years from now—10 years from now—and then challenge people to reach for those goals,” stated one study participant (Interview A).

Dealing with economic reality in the face of a dynamic global economy means that leaders must be cognizant of subtle changes that may have a great impact on the workforce system. “I always try to relay to everyone ‘let’s be proactive rather than reactive’ in this economy that we’re faced with in [my state]—with the changing world all the time. It’s always hard . . . without a crystal ball, to be proactive” (Interview D).

Disputes over the mission of system stakeholders, like community colleges, provide WFD leadership with ongoing identity and cultural challenges, according to one study participant:

There’s still a lot of what I would call the “mission” of the role of the community college system plays as preparing someone for an associate’s degree and transfer to a 4-year college. That has been instilled from [the state] for the last 30 years, or whatever. So, we have to turn that around. The primary mission of the community college is to serve the workforce needs of the region that the community college serves. So, that’s a big change. (Interview C)
Guiding conversations and assisting the community college system to broaden its identity to include and honor the pragmatic WFD mission is a perennial goal for some state board leaders.

**Regime theory in the state-level WFD board ecosystem.** Regime theory offers a compelling theoretical lens for understanding how progressive state-level WFD systems sustained collaborations that transcend the tenure of individual board members, including the tenure of board leadership (Clarke, 2004; Giloth, 2004; S. R. Smith & Davis, 2004). The progressive state-level WFD board chairs in this study described the complex foundation of relationships, organizational structures, and network of strong leaders on the board and among stakeholder groups who collaborate to achieve sustainable, positive outcomes (Giloth, 2004; Moynihan et al., 2011).

In addition to the integrative leadership skills demonstrated by WFD board chairs, and the attributes of WFD systems that are shared between leadership and regime theories, study participants described activities that are characteristic of the stable regimes.

**Successful regimes appreciate starting conditions.** According to Ansell and Gash (2007), establishing a stable regime requires an appreciation of the starting conditions among regime partners. Special consideration is given to asymmetrical dissemination of knowledge or power and the history of conflict or cooperation among the stakeholder communities. Study participants demonstrated sensitivity to historical conflicts among stakeholders as well as persistent socioeconomic and cultural barriers to success encountered with underserved populations. In describing one such population, a study participant noted that problems were “very deep-rooted, systemic issues that go back over 100 years” (Interview E).
The political legacy of a state greatly impacts how the WFD system is structured and, to a certain extent, how successful a board chair can be in driving the system to produce successful outcomes. In describing the WFD environment encountered upon arrival, one board chair shared that it was the . . . public employees . . . driving strategy, and in the end, it never moved fast enough. Politics got in the way. There was a fight for money, so [the governor] flipped it on its head and said, “We’re going to disband this whole concept and we’re going to make it business lead.” The governance was written in such a way that all decisions had to be with all voting members on the business side. (Interview A)

As Ansell and Gash (2007) suggested, understanding how an imbalance of power in the starting condition stalled progress led to a new organizational and governance structure that redistributed legitimate power to facilitate collaborative governance.

**Enduring regimes utilize exportable actions and shared resources.** Enduring regimes leverage institutional knowledge and share best practices to enhance the virtuous cycle produced by replicating successful interactions among stakeholders (Dent, 2008). One interviewee shared that the state-level WFD board published a free, online resource about establishing a business sector strategy. “It’s a full tool kit for how to basically take what we did, from the ground up, and institute [it]. We’re all about sharing those ideas” (Interview A).

In addition to creating and sharing roadmaps for successful WFD programs, board chairs also noted that the free exchange of ideas within the system among stakeholders was seen as an indicator of collaborative governance success:

One of the things that I’ve been really excited about is more and more of those [stakeholder] institutions are integrating the objectives that are being discussed at [the workforce development sponsored program] within their own strategic plans. It kind of drives it into areas that don’t necessarily talk to each other. The language between CEOs and manufacturers and health care and research institutions, along with universities and technical colleges and [the] K–12 system—you get that language beat out, develop a common understanding at a high level, and then they can take it to
their organization and put their own brand on it. That seems to be gaining a lot of traction. That way they can put it in their own language—their own “speak”—but at the higher levels there’s common themes on where we’re going and what we’re doing. (Interview B)

**Successful regimes are resilient in dynamic environments.** Board chairs were quick to recognize endless shifts in the forces that shape the economic and WFD ecosystem within their states. “The changing world, the changing workforce, the changing needs of the workforce. It’s a very rapidly moving piece all the time” (Interview C).

Despite dynamic conditions, board chairs continued to innovate to create structures that can provide essential service under rapidly changing conditions:

A year ago, we had some significant layoffs in the [industry] sector. Trying to stay ahead of the game to help retain our workers . . . our youth . . . is probably the most important thing the council is faced with for the last year, year and a half. (Interview D)

Describing the response to the situation, the board chair went on to say,

As a council, within 2 days we instantly came together and came up with some ideas. Got with the governor’s office and the state officials and throughout employment opportunities for these laid-off [workers] to stay in [our state]. [We developed advertisement] campaigns that you can go work in our prisons, you can work in our highway department—transportation has some openings. So, we were able to instantly get these job opportunities out to the unemployed workers that were temporarily laid off. This was new and innovative. We had never been faced with [industry] layoffs in [our state] before. (Interview D)

**Theoretical Framework and Study Findings**

Integrative leadership and regime theories are useful in providing a lens through which the lived experiences of state-level WFD board chairs may be understood. That said, their authentic narratives provide additional data not easily categorized through these theoretical frameworks. Chief among the previously uncharacterized findings are (a) technical expertise of WFD and related systems, (b) background with local economics, (c) engagement as a facilitator of connectivity, and (d) uneasiness with political environment.
**Technical expertise of WFD and related systems.** Study participants shared their backgrounds and motivations for participating in their state-level WFD systems. Through their narratives, many board chairs described the benefits of firsthand, practical experience, with the inner workings of the WFD delivery system, state politics, or higher education as a key differentiator for success in the role. One board chair shared the following advice for making new state-level appointments:

Well, I think they’ve got to have some background in the system as it’s delivered. So, as an example, I was at a local board, or a regional board about 10 years and chaired that, and I was actually on the board of the agency that delivered services for the board. So, coming from that direction I had a kind of understanding—not from an administrative or bureaucratic point of view, but a “boots-on-the-ground” [perspective]. This is what our people do in terms of service delivery. I think that having been grounded in that and having that understanding of where all these resources go and what are we actually getting done [is important]. (Interview B)

This board chair went on to explain that his or her additional 15 years of experience working with the state technical college and university systems, in addition to the WFD system, had proven to be extremely helpful in moderating board challenges.

**Background with local economics.** Although board chairs note that a person does not need to be an economist to be successful in the position, having a general understanding of the local economy was reported to be beneficial:

I would say that one [competency for a new board chair] is a good knowledge and perspective on the economy. To me, all workforce system is tied to the economy, and it comes back to the companies that are expanding, growing, what we’re attracting to the state. And, as you know . . . skilled labor is a huge, huge factor in the decision [to locate a business in a state]. Also, understanding economic trends. You know, the economy is rapidly changing, and you know, to continue to have somebody good here, you have to have a high-level perspective on all of that. (Interview C)

**Engagement as a facilitator of connectivity.** The connections generated through this strategy have created bonds that resulted in additional leadership opportunities. One interviewee proudly shared that “now we have two different industry lead champions that
came out of [the WFD council] that are direct appointees of the governor now in different areas that didn’t even know the governor before they started working on the sectors piece” (Interview A). Without exposure to WFD activities, the contributions of these private-sector leaders would not have been available to the citizens of their state.

**Uneasiness with political environment.** A common theme among interviewees was their general sense of discomfort with the political environment. The uneasiness manifested in a variety of ways, including the need to “apologize” when making statements that were considered by the participant to be overtly partisan in nature, or when describing the reluctance displayed by the business community when approached with opportunities to engage with the WFD system to ease workforce gaps and challenges. While board chairs were also quick to share their experiences in maximizing WFD outcomes by the judicious use of political capital, the overarching theme of discomfort with the political process appears to limit engagement and impede progress in many instances.

**Fidelity of findings to the theoretical framework.** According to qualitative methodologists Creswell (1998, 2009) and Yin (2014), research benefits from the application of theory in the design, execution, and analysis of qualitative data. Theory provides a “broad explanation for behaviors and attitudes” (Creswell, 2009, p. 61). The emergent nature of qualitative inquiry provides the researcher opportunities to reveal findings that transcend the guiding theoretical framework.

Integrative leadership and political regime theory provided “an initial though tentative theory about the case” (Yin, 2014, p. 220). That being said, additional findings concerning leader’s technical expertise, connectivity facilitation, and their general uneasiness with
political environment suggests that alternative theories of leadership might provide better alignment with the lived experience of state-level WIB chairs.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 presented the study’s findings in the form of data generated and analyzed through the application of cross-case study methodology. The analysis was informed by use of integrative leadership and regime theories. Data were collected from three distinct sources: (a) semistructured interviews with six state-level WFD board chairs, (b) a review of public records available online through WFD state board Web sites, and (c) responses to the “Working Together” questionnaire.

Four research questions framed this systematic inquiry. The first question explored how WFD board chairs understand their role and the responsibilities given to them under federal regulations. In response, incumbent chairs described two separate but related areas of responsibility. The first and most easily identified duties of the state WIB chair were collectively referred to as the “management” responsibilities. Although these are admittedly important to the success of the WFD system, it was the complex “leadership” role that dominated interviewee narratives.

As successful private-sector leaders in their own right, participants explained that in the WFD context, they act intermittently as interpreter, coach, cheerleader, educator, and analyst. Their expertise helped bridge cultural and communication gaps between stakeholder groups, moving the system forward to provide results needed by society. Mindful attention to the relevance of programs and the rigor with which they hold themselves, and the programs they oversee, accountable were common themes that emerged from narratives.
The second research question queried the lessons learned by board chairs throughout their tenure. Admittedly, WFD problems are complex, *wicked* problems and not amenable to short-term solutions. As such, board chairs shared that solutions required significant personal time investment to build relationships with a wide variety of stakeholders and to listen to constituents’ concerns, especially those expressed by business leaders, to seek deep understandings of short- and long-term needs.

According to interviewees, the complexity of the problems and solutions means that no one person, organization, or entity has all the answers. Stakeholder groups must work together to resolve issues, generate new interpretations, and implement programs that achieve measurable results. Resilience and tenacity are required, as not every solution will be popular, and most will not be done overnight.

WIB chairs leveraged what, and whom, they already knew to strengthen bonds, gain access, and advocate on behalf of the workforce system. In doing so, they took the time to pause and reflect on how far they have come in effecting change in their states—to shine a light on the success of others and to truly understand how the system has impacted their citizens.

The third area of inquiry concerned the role that politics plays in the WFD context. While the role of the WIB chair is inherently political, board chairs felt the need to apologize when framing discussions in political terms. Political power, when used properly, is a valuable asset in mobilizing people to form solid, stable coalitions and effective regimes. That said, participants were quick to describe the darker side of the political landscape and the effect it can have in stalling progress, especially when it comes to appointments to state boards.
In the final research question, the effect of WIOA legislation on the future of state-level WFD efforts was considered. Interviewees both praised the regulation as “a breath of fresh air” and also bemoaned some of the more problematic points with the regulation.

Working collaboratively with other state board chairs, governors, and professional staff at the NGA, interviewees described their ongoing efforts to improve WIOA for the future, especially in providing states more flexibility to interpret when, where, and how funding is applied to resolve workforce issues at the local level.

Data collected from survey responses and public records demonstrated consistency with interviewee narratives, improving the overall trustworthiness of the findings. The chapter concluded with an analysis of leaders’ narratives in the WFD context and the alignment of their lived experience with the tenets of integrative leadership and regime theories.

In Chapter 5, I explore the implications of the findings for improving leadership in state-level WFD, consider alternative theoretical perspectives, and make recommendations for further research in this important, complex environment.
Chapter 5: Implications

This concluding chapter recaps the content of the prior four chapters and then discusses the findings, conclusions, and implications of the study. This chapter focuses on how the findings in the study respond to the research questions. The chapter suggests implications from the findings. Lastly, the chapter concludes with recommendations for state-level WFD board chair selection, professional development, and best practices as well as suggesting future research opportunities.

Overview

The purpose of this descriptive, cross-case study was to assess the similarities and differences in perceptions of leadership complexity among state-level WFD board chairs. This study explored issues of cross-sector collaboration from the individual and organizational perspectives. As such, the study was informed by theories of collaborative leadership (integrative leadership for collaborative governance) and organizational level (political regime theory).

Study participants were solicited from among a pool of 14 U.S. states with a legacy of progressive interpretation of federal WFD regulations and a strong, long-term commitment to public education. State scores on the CFED’s Assets and Opportunity Scorecard informed the composition of the state pool. A total of six state-level WFD board chairs volunteered to participate in the study.

As stipulated in the selection criteria (see Appendix I), all participants were active state board chairs with greater than 1 year of service in this governor-appointed role. Participants responded to a series of semistructured interview questions derived from the four following research questions:
• How do state-level WIB chairs from progressive states understand their role and the responsibilities they have been given under federal workforce legislation?

• How do these leaders perceive personal learning as a contributor to successful WFD leadership?

• From their perspective, what impact does the political environment play in state-level WIB chairs’ ability to effect change?

• How do state-level WIB chairs envision the role WIOA plays in shaping future workforce strategies in their respective states?

In addition to participant interviews, corroborating data from a review of public records, including published reports, plans, meeting agendas, and meeting minutes, were collected. Documents reviewed validated statements interviewees made about council practice, program design, special topics, and local facility tours, albeit with less detail than was described by interviewee narratives.

As an advance organizer on collaboration (Lagerwerf et al., 2008), participants were asked to complete the “Working Together: A Profile of Collaboration” questionnaire. In addition to the benefits provided by advanced organizers, this tool also provided a tertiary source of information to triangulate data. Each data source was reviewed as an independent data stream before being synthesized, in accordance with the concurrent analysis methodology described by Creswell and Plano Clark (2007). The message consistency of the secondary and tertiary data streams with the primary narrative data improves the overall trustworthiness of the study findings (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014).
Summary of Findings

This study sought to add to the body of knowledge about leadership and the U.S. WFD by exploring the perceptions of leadership among a select group of individuals with both the legitimate authority and the potential to generate value for the citizens of their respective states.

Research Question 1. State-level WFD board chairs described their position as encompassing two related but different roles. The first role focused primarily on administrative duties, namely, monitoring compliance with federal and state-specific WFD legislation, managing personnel issues, and overseeing process legitimacy.

The second, and arguably, more time-consuming aspect of the state-level WFD board chair role involves leadership duties. For the purpose of this study, leadership is conceptualized as the stewardship of relationships, arbiter of program relevance, and auditor of WFD program rigor.

Chief among the relationships that WFD board chairs monitor are relationships among council members, elected officials, commission staff, other governmental partner agencies, service providers, and customers. As interviewees reported, customers refer to both job seekers and business owners in need of workforce services to grow and expand within their industry sector.

State-level WFD board chairs report that they have a role to play guiding the system to remain relevant in the face of economic, political, and demographic shifts. Additionally, as the legitimate seat of authority, board chairs are responsible to develop systems to ensure rigor for the quality of programs and processes, openness and transparency of
communications, and accuracy and precision of data used to develop and implement workforce policy.

**Research Question 2.** In their seminal work, Rittel and Webber (1973) coined the phrase *wicked problem* to describe issues of public interest that are elusive, not well understood, and difficult to measure in terms of the degree to which interventions make an impact. State-level WFD board chair narratives describe WFD issues as wicked problems.

Reflecting on the challenge of resolving workforce issues, study participants shared the importance of their personal learning through a series of insights in the form of lessons learned. Specifically, interviewees shared the following personal discernments:

- Pick your battles wisely.
- Keep your eye on the big picture.
- Honor the past, but look to the future.
- Rely on staff to manage administrative duties.
- Let others shine.
- Be a collaborative leader.
- Listen closely to the business community.
- Put in the time to do the job properly.
- Stay the course.

WFD issues are, as Rittel and Webber (1973) suggested, wicked problems and will not be resolved in a vacuum, nor will they be resolved overnight according to study participants. WFD leaders must take a long view for success, while remembering to celebrate the small wins along the way.
Research Question 3. Politics involves the cooperation, negotiation, and conflict employed by society to determine the distribution of resources among citizens (Alexander, 2014). That being said, the role of the WIB chair is inherently political, and yet, interviewees displayed discomfort when framing discussions in political terms.

Political power, when used properly, was seen as a valuable asset in mobilizing people to form solid, stable coalitions and effective regimes. Soliciting the help of elected officials to endorse WFD initiatives can make the difference between success and mediocrity. That said, participants were quick to describe the darker side of the political landscape and the effect it can have in stalling progress, especially when it comes to appointments to state boards. At the national level, the politics involved in the newly enacted WIOA legislation was critiqued for perpetuating the one-size-fits-all philosophy that creates compliance challenges at the state level.

Research Question 4. Praised for receiving bicameral and bipartisan support, a rarity in the polarized political environment of the Obama administration, WIOA shifts the trajectory for America’s WFD system. Elements of this new legislation appeal to both major political parties, making it a true political victory and providing an important framework for modernizing America’s WFD system.

Not surprisingly, study participants saw WIOA as a “breath of fresh air.” The newly enacted WIOA directly bears the combined efforts and imprint of state-level WFD board chairs. Working in concert with the NGA’s NASWBC, state-level board chairs endorsed the following provisions of WIOA as improvements to the earlier WIA: (a) more control and oversight by business leaders, (b) slightly less bureaucratic burden for addressing funding issues, (c) greater emphasis on apprenticeship programs, (d) increased focus on collaborative
strategic planning cycles, and (e) great emphasis on serving clients in traditionally unserved populations.

Data Analysis

To categorize and analyze the data generated through this study, two theoretical lenses were employed. At the individual level of interpretation, integrated leadership theory was used as theoretical scaffolding. Regime theory provided a secondary perspective, allowing for interpretation of the organization and structures developed to create sustainable results that transcend the tenure of individual state-level WFD board chairs.

Relationship to integrative leadership theory. According to Shinn (2007), influencing public policy and practice requires that critical messages be sent in language that is consistent with, and easily understood by, politicians and regulators. Unless critical concepts are framed appropriately and clothed in language of the audience, the impact is unlikely to resonate, and as such the resulting policy will fall short of the mark.

Extending this fundamental concept to the business context, study participants shared the importance of establishing a common language, not just among the various stakeholder communities (Interview B), but also pointed to the pivotal role that they play in capturing the attention of business leaders. As successful business leaders in their own rights, state-level WIB chairs share similar issues and challenges with leaders in myriad industrial sectors. The common experience and language found between business leaders facilitates understanding and trust, a precursor to the establishment of stable regimes (Ansell & Gash, 2007; Giloth, 2004). From their unique position, WIB chairs were able to provide motivation and drive a call to action among their peers that could not be duplicated by other means (Interview A).
Interestingly, participant narratives underscored leadership competencies that are not readily apparent in scholarly literature supporting transformational or integrative leadership theories. Chief among the departure from more holistic leadership attributes were references to the critical importance of efficiently and effectively dispensing with the managerial duties of the WIB chair role (Interview C). In these stories, the role that the Board chair played was to recognize discrepancies, either in resource allocation or programmatic distribution, and dispatch solutions to address deficiencies. Although WIB chair narratives provided fewer examples of transactional leadership (Caldwell, 2003), these competencies were always the first experiences described by participants, and once described by interviewees, transactional competencies drifted from their stream of consciousness.

That said, participants did not dismiss these managerial duties as irrelevant or pedestrian. In a corollary with the concepts described by Rittel and Webber (1973), the issues addressed by transactional competencies were relatively uncomplicated – not unimportant. Determining what is right or wrong, in the collective best interest, or in keeping with the intent of regulations was easier to determine in these story lines. However, experiences addressed by what interviewees described as “leadership” competencies were often messy, ill-defined, and nuanced – in other words, they were wicked leadership challenges (Interview E).

This departure from integrative leadership tenets illustrates the complexity of the leadership experience in the workforce development context. According to the leaders in this study, WIB chairs must be comfortable and proficient dealing with situations that call upon their transactional and integrative leadership competencies. Neither skill set is sufficient in isolation to provide all the tools needed for success.
**Relationship to regime theory.** WIB chair narratives confirm the use of deliberative democracy as a guiding principle for executing workforce development imperatives (Dryzek, 2004). Study participants shared their experiences crafting situations that allowed groups affected by workforce development decisions to engage in the process, often taking commission deliberations to participant’s locale, despite what was often described as significant effort to do so (Interview D).

This commitment to the participative nature of workforce deliberations is in keeping with the principles of collaborative governance (Ansell & Gash, 2007; McGuire, 2013). That said, interviewees reported a tension in the system based on temporal dissonance between the business community, and the workforce development system. Balancing the needs of business to respond quickly to shifts in the environment, with the need for transparency in deliberations and democratic decision-making remain a perplexing dilemma for WIB chairs.

The findings of this study provide evidence that the activities and perceptions of state-level WFD board chairs are directionally consistent with the tenets of both regime and integrative leadership theory as illustrated by Table 7. This study concurred with the literature on the importance of collaborative, transparent, and democratic processes for successful WFD affairs. Collaboration, as both a leadership competency and a key element of WFD system structure, was well represented in participant narratives.

In addition, the study revealed new findings not directly related to the theoretical framework provided. Among these emerging themes were the importance of WFD board chair competency with (a) WFD and related systems, (b) local economies, (c) engagement and connectivity, and (d) political environments.
Implications of Findings

The findings of this study further inform practitioners and researchers in the organizational structures and leadership behaviors associated with policy implementation in the complex WFD environment.

Implications for America’s high-risk citizens. According to C. Stone (2005), social and economic inequalities limit access to political power for disadvantaged, vulnerable populations. Although, in theory, every citizen has equal access to engage in the political process, in practice, meaningful influence is limited to those who have discretionary time and resources to participate fully.

C. Stone’s (2005) argument that collaborative governance can be an effective device to articulate the needs of vulnerable populations is relevant to the WFD context. Likewise, Van Wart (2013a) suggested that integrative leaders are profoundly aware of social justice issues and are often called on to speak for those who are disadvantaged.

This study suggests that state-level WFD board chairs demonstrated great compassion for underserved populations. Not only did they describe successes that had been achieved with at-risk youth, incarcerated persons, immigrants, ethnic minorities, or those with limited skills and experience, as a source of great pride, but they also shared how important the work of their commission or council had been toward empowering these individuals to take control of their own future.

Nonetheless, the participants of this study were also quick to point out, despite past success, that much more must be done to continue to improve the lives of disadvantaged citizens. The narratives suggested that these leaders remain committed to speaking for those who are not currently engaged in political discourse.
Implications for WFD system partners. The state-level WFD board chairs interviewed for this study consistently demonstrated application or mastery of integrative leadership skill and collaborative governance structure. For partner agencies and other key stakeholders, development of similar skills and adoption of collaborative social structures are likely to be the hallmark for career success in the WFD space. Learning to adapt to collaborative structures and shared power dynamics will likely become crucial competencies, if they have not yet been introduced as such within partner agencies.

Implications for future WFD regulation. The WFD board chairs interviewed in this study underscored the importance of lobbying at the national level using one voice, under the auspices of the NGA. To date, those efforts have been largely successful and helped to craft the WIOA legislation that received bipartisan and bicameral support. That said, interviewees urged full participation among all state and territorial WFD board chairs in an effort to maximize lobbying power and increase opportunities to share knowledge and best practices.

Implications for WFD board chair practice. Workforce Investment Board Chair narratives demonstrated the need for Board Chairs to continue their own professional development and personal learning journey throughout their tenure. As reported by one respondent (Interview D) the strategy of rotating meeting locations, or showcasing groups or industry sectors with special needs was not only instrumental for sharing critical knowledge and increasing sensitivity among board members, but also provided a platform for personal learning and development.

Perhaps less obvious, but arguably equal to, or more important than raising awareness and sensitivity of key issues, was learning how to work in a highly political environment. Learning where true power is situated and gaining access to inform, support or influence
policy-makers was reported to be an ongoing priority for WIB chairs (Interview F). Coffield (2000) echoes comments from WIB chairs interviewed in this study about the criticality of speaking truth to power in the dynamic workforce development context.

“Few employers seem to see the point of retraining (after all, why increase the skills of a valued worker when that may make him/her more likely to leave?)” (Coffield, 2000, p. 189). Accordingly, governments must take a key role in encouraging lifelong learning to maintain and grow the skills needed for viability in the global economy. To achieve this outcome WIB chairs must successfully penetrate power structures and elevate the conversation to the highest level of state government. To do this requires confidence and connections, both attributes acquired with the assistance of personal learning, professional development, and a bank of political capital collected over time.

**Recommendations**

The recommendations concerning the WIB chair role based on the findings from this study are twofold. First are recommendations for the selection of state-level WFD board chairs. Second are recommendations for ongoing professional development of incumbent state-level WFD leaders. Additional recommendations are more structural in nature, and contemplate how workforce board chairs engage with the political environment, as well as how workforce systems at the state level redefine themselves under the new WIOA environment.

**Recommendations for selecting WFD leaders.** The findings of this study provide useful insights into leadership and organizational structures that have been successfully employed by state-level WFD board chairs. As stipulated by WIOA legislation, state-level board chairs are appointed by the governor of each state or commonwealth. Although the
calculus used by state executives during the appointment process was outside the scope of this study, the findings suggest that a number of leadership and technical competencies should be considered when appointing state-level board chairs.

**Integrative leadership style.** This study suggests that successful state-level WFD board chairs routinely exhibit, or master, behaviors consistent with integrative leadership theory. As study participants shared, state-level chairs reject autocratic decision-making practice and hierarchical organizational structures as ineffective, preferring cross-functional, interagency, team-based systems (Interview D).

Collaborative or integrative leadership abilities are well suited to address wicked WFD problems (Van Wart, 2013b). By providing a safe space for face-to-face dialog that facilitates debate, integrative leadership brings clarity and definition to complex issues (Page, 2010). As interviewee narratives revealed, the value provided to council proceedings by institutionalizing rotating meeting venues significantly outweighed the inconvenience of what can be substantial travel obligations (Interview A; Interview C; Interview E; Interview F).

Chrislip and Larson (1994) posited that collaboration entails more than just sharing information and transferring knowledge, and more importantly, it entails more than coordinating efforts so that each party can achieve its goals. Rather the aim was to create a shared vision and joint strategies to address concerns that go beyond the purview of any particular party. (p. 5)

The state-level WFD board chairs in this study recognized the need to create a vision for success, while remaining aware of shifting environmental conditions (Interview A; Interview B; Interview C; Interview D).
In the WFD paradigm, successful integrative leaders bring together nonprofits, government, community, and businesses to solve problems for the betterment of society (Page, 2010; Sun & Anderson, 2012; Van Wart, 2013b). Identifying private-sector leaders committed to building successful communities, engaging mutual learning, and driving cooperative problem solving should be high on the list of priorities for state officials in need of filling WFD vacancies.

**Collaborative governance experience.** According to interviewees, leaders accustomed to the private sector often struggle to reconcile both the language and pace of change typical of public-sector enterprise (Interview B). Prior experience with collaborative governance structures would benefit rising WFD leaders. Familiarity with the organizational language, culture, and the business processes of stakeholder communities can help leaders act as an effective translator between the myriad WFD players. Additionally, maintaining the sense of balance needed to appreciate the importance of transparent, democratic processes while applying steady incentives needed to “move at the speed of business” requires skills that may best be acquired through experience in collaborative government environs.

**Personal bandwidth.** A common theme expressed by study participants was the need for WFD board chairs to invest time and effort into moving WFD agendas forward. The time and personal stamina needed to sustain forward momentum through the dynamic economic, political, and social environment were reported by study participants to be significant.

Generating consensus, establishing trust among stakeholders, and creating an enduring regime require time—and, according to scholars, there are no substitutes or quick work-around techniques that can expedite the process (Coglianese, 1997; Coglianese & Allen, 2004; Wondolleck & Yaffe, 2003). Democratic principles and praxis are messy, time
consuming, and aesthetically unpleasant, but in the final analysis, adherence to this practice can result in a virtuous cycle of progress.

That being said, the ability to carve out the time from the responsibilities of a private-sector position is one constraint that should be carefully evaluated by both governors and potential WFD board chairs when making, or accepting, appointment decisions.

**Familiarity with local economic trends.** Although WFD board chairs interviewed for this study did not consider themselves economists, they did share that an aptitude to follow economic trends was advantageous. Interviewees shared that one pivotal element of the WFD board chair role is to remain ahead of economic trends:

> I think in a leadership role you really need to keep your head up in the political environment, financial environment—and most importantly in the business environment—know what’s coming and what trends we need to be in front of rather than being reactive to. (Interview A)

Participants in this study frequently mentioned that the one-size-fits-all approach to WFD can be problematic. This phenomenon is not isolated to the federal versus state dichotomy; even within a single state or commonwealth, a vast array of localized economic factors can impact WFD issues. Selecting individuals who have both the aptitude for economic discourse and the willingness to reach out to all regions and industry sectors, both rural and metropolitan, will benefit the WFD system and the citizens and businesses that use the valuable services provided.

**Experience with one or more system partners.** According to Page (2010), collaborative leaders have access to resources and a strategy to use incentives to induce others into action. Sun and Anderson (2012) noted that they often come to the planning table with a bank of social capital and a willingness to share power to achieve objectives.
In this study, participants noted that experience with one or more partner organizations helps when moving WFD agendas forward (Interview B). Not only does this experience shorten the appointee’s learning curve by empowering WFD board chairs with a better understanding of the inner workings of partner agencies but it also provides them with the language skills needed to act as an effective translator and intermediary between the business community and service providers from either the public, nonprofit, or private sector.

WFD board chairs who come to their role equipped with a bank of social capital accumulated through participation in other public–private engagements can also be beneficial, according to interviewees. As one interviewee shared, leveraging relationships and affiliated resources from preexisting roles provides an advantage for board chairs. “If you’re working with them to give them resources, they’re a lot more apt to work with you in [workforce development] initiatives” (Interview B).

**Political savvy.** Integrative leaders manifest cognitive, social, and behavioral complexity, making them good barometers of social interaction (Sun & Anderson, 2012). Through their personal narratives, WFD board chairs demonstrated their desire and ability to monitor the social landscape and provide effective interventions when necessary to maintain momentum with program initiatives. Board chairs were adept with the intricacies of interpersonal relations and demonstrated the wisdom needed to influence individuals to meet the best interests of the citizens of their respective states.

As one interviewee acknowledged, gaining the support of people in positions of authority “took a little bit of leadership on our end—to ask leaders and step back from . . . our own ego . . . [and ask] who’s ego can we use to get this going?” (Interview A). Despite
their skill, board chairs interviewed for this study shared a certain discomfort with political processes.

According to scholars, a general dislike of politics is not new for American democracy (Bennett, 1997). Research in political behavior since WWII has indicated that each generation tends to have less knowledge of, and interest in, politics. While a healthy distrust of public leadership is a “mainstay of democratic politics” (Bruno, 2017, p. 295), the recent surge in civic suspicion and cynicism has the potential to undermine the foundation of democratic leadership to act as a trustee for our citizens. “Fossilized distrust” (Allen, as cited in Bruno, 2017, p. 297) has the potential to facilitate withdrawal from the political process, concentrating power and influence with a shrinking number of individuals who remain engaged.

Additionally, research conducted in political science has suggested a positive correlation between socioeconomic performance and satisfaction with democracy (Kestilä-Kekkonen & Söderlund, 2017). In the WFD context, the implications for the relationship between economic well-being and engagement with politics are profound. Paradoxically, during challenging economic times, when WFD has the potential to provide great benefit to citizens, trust in the system—and consequently engagement—may wane.

**Recommendations for developing WFD leaders.** Throughout the interview process, it was noted that WFD board chairs did not directly mention ongoing strategies for their own professional development in this complex leadership role. Indirectly, however, leaders provided a great deal of insight concerning professional development for board members and, by extension, future board chairs.
The first recommendation for professional development for WFD board chairs is to create firsthand, experiential learning opportunities for commission members. In addition to providing local WFD partners an opportunity to share in their successes and challenges, instituting the practice of rotating council meetings at local one-stops, community colleges, or other member locations was compelling and meaningful, despite the considerable effort and dedication needed to sustain the program. Furthermore, highlighting personal, individual stories of success or challenge helps humanize efforts that might otherwise seem remote or faceless.

The second recommendation that emerged from the data is to enhance and expand learning opportunities through professional organizations such as the NGA. Board chairs interviewed for this study were unanimously supportive of both the lobbying efforts of the NGA to influence future legislation and the significant benefits participation with this organization had to share best WFD practices.

In addition, the NGA is well positioned to increase and improve instruction about politics in the WFD sector. As a resource to our nation’s chief state-level executives, they share a unifying goal to combat the tendency for citizens to disparage the compromise and bargaining that are at the core of democratic proceedings. According to political science scholars, large portions of the American population do not understand that democracy requires persons in positions of authority to make a case for a position for the purpose of facilitating debate so that a mutually agreed-upon outcome can be obtained (Bennett, 1997).

Lastly, full participation in the NGA’s NASWBC by all 55 potential members would maximize lobbying power and knowledge sharing among the exclusive state-level membership. Furthermore, as a national organization, the NASWBC is uniquely positioned
to develop a standard onboarding curricula to assist newly appointed WFD chairs acclimate to their state-level role.

**Recommendations for working in a political environment.** The data from this study suggested that WIB chairs exhibit ambiguity towards political endeavors. As an appointee of the state governor’s office, WIB chairs serve at the pleasure of their chief executive (WIOA, 2014). Simultaneously these individuals represent the interests of, and embody the skills and competencies inherent in the private sector. Against this backdrop, WIB chairs are charged with the task of moving a multi-cultural, loosely-coupled system forward in keeping with both democratic principles and within a temporal framework to properly address the needs of a rapidly changing business landscape.

A variety of best practices for thriving in such a politically charged environment emerged from this inquiry. One of the most compelling strategies involved the mindful collaboration with elected officials (Interview A). As touchstones for local power and influence, mayors can be remarkably successful in mobilizing the local business community out of complacency and into meaningful action. Additionally, the successful WIB chairs in this study repeatedly commented on the benefits provided by a stored bank of political capital accumulated through a history of good will and reciprocity (Ansell & Gash, 2007; Giloth, 2004).

With that being said, respondents simultaneously displayed a level of discomfort when shaping comments around a political framework (Interview A). One possible explanation for this tension may be that politics, in this workforce development context, or at this time in our history, is not conceived as a neutral phenomenon (Mintzberg 1983, Pfeffer, 1981 as referenced in Ahearn, Ferris, Hochwarter, Douglas & Ammeter, 2004).
As a value-laden construct, developing political skill and confidence requires the leader to weigh conflicting values while achieving desired outcomes. According to Gerald Ferris (2007) political skill development involves “contextually specific knowledge acquisition acquired through work experience, mentoring relationships, and other developmental experiences” (p. 314). In the WFD context, WIB chairs advocated for the development of robust relationships among all members of the greater system, including building relationships among their peers across state lines.

**Recommendations for structuring WFD under WIOA.** As reported by WIB chairs in this study, WIOA replaces the now retired WIA and in doing so, reduces many of the issues inherent with the outdated regulation. Of primary interest to study participants was the focus the new regulation has on increasing the ownership of the system on the business community. While this shift is a welcome one, and endorsed by the collective group of state board chairs as evidenced by the National Governor’s Association, this focus on business input and direction brings with it more responsibility for business to fully engage and make meaningful workforce decisions.

With this new focus and authority comes the responsibility for businesses to connect, engage, and persist through the challenging democratic process cycle. As the study participants shared, this level of engagement is difficult for business leaders, on a number of levels, and requires those who engage in the system to overcome preconceived notions about workforce development (Interview F), persist in their engagements, and remain an active participant even during business cycles that do not require WFD system support.

State-level WIB chairs are well suited to engage their peers in this pursuit, and all of the participants in this study have described ongoing commitment to increase business
engagement as a prime strategic objective under WIOA. Exploring opportunities to measure and track communication, engagement, and customer satisfaction with business community requires structural changes in outreach, public relations, and service center operations in the years ahead.

**Recommendations for theoretical framework in WFD research.** While a review of literature provided precedence for the utility of collaborative, integrative leadership (Koehn, 2010) and regime theory (Giloth, 2004) as useful tools for understanding the WFD context, participant narratives revealed behaviors and attitudes not generally attributed to these paradigms. The discomfort interviewees exhibited when describing issues in political terms was one notable unanticipated deviation from the theoretical and conceptual framework that shaped this study.

According to Ammeter, Douglas, Gardner, Hochwarter, and Ferris (2002), politics has garnered an undesirable reputation for decades. “To the average individual, the term organizational politics is likely to conjure a host of reprehensible images that include (but are not limited to) backroom manipulation, behind-the-scenes maneuvering, and self-serving posturing” (p. 753). This perception of political action as the “dark side” of human behavior casts a shadow over its utility in democratic society, where politics is an inherently necessary, neutral component of organizational success.

Gobillot (2006) offered a new theory of political leadership that may provide additional insight into the experience of WIB chairs beyond what was offered by integrative leadership theory. According to Dimitrov (2017), Gobillot’s connected leadership theory provides more effective problem-solving avenues for 21st-century leaders:
Leaders…will always face new challenges and adapt to them. Along with it should not fall only for the immediate problems, must pay attention to the “big overall picture”, the changing era, the emergence of qualitatively new, and unknown in the past changes and societal challenges, etc. In this sense, every leader must create a flexible organization that “is resistant to contextual change.” (p. 31)

An interdependent world (Crosby & Bryson, 2005a) generates complex, wicked problems that require flexible responses (Page, 2010; Schneider & Somers, 2006). Issues that cannot be addressed unilaterally, due to ill-defined scope and complex causality, require the institution of virtuous regimes (Litta, 2012). In the WFD context, leaders must grapple with the negativity associated with politicking to generate informal connections and “grease the wheels of formal structure” (Gobillot as referenced by Dimitrov, 2017).

**Suggested Future Research**

Three topics are suggested for further research. The first is to continue exploring the leadership experience of state-level WFD board chairs, with a focus on newly appointed leaders. A detailed examination of their journey in real time would provide additional insight into the facilitating and inhibiting influences that shape their professional growth and development in this space. As new gubernatorial appointees, nascent WIB chair perceptions of politicking in the WFD context might shed light on similarities and differences with that of the private sector.

The second recommendation is to conduct additional research on the experiences of state-level WFD board chairs from states that were excluded from this study by the progressive policy legacy described. A study of this type would provide valuable data about the challenges faced in states that have WFD systems that have evolved from alternative norms and political conditions.
The third research topic is an investigation of the “followship” experience of state-level WFD board members (Barrette, 2010; Hurwitz & Hurwitz, 2009). While this study focused on the leadership experience at the state-level WFD board, this represents only part of the complex leader–follower dynamic. Exploring this volunteer experience from the perspective of board members would enhance scholarly literature on WFD operations.

**Conclusion**

This study comes at a pivotal time for America’s workforce development system. Not only is the pace of change happening at unprecedented rates, challenging leaders to respond to complex issues on a daily basis, but the very nature of those changes become increasingly more difficult. These *wicked* challenges (Rittel & Webber, 1973) are the backdrop of the American economy, and therefore, the American workforce development system. As Pakornsawat (2016) suggested, our contemporary situation is “a time when economies are sagging, growth is lackluster at best, and governments, politicians, and business and industry leaders are decrying the urgent need for a skilled workforce to fill the jobs of today and tomorrow” (p. 255).

In response to this changing environment, Congress enacted the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act in 2014. At this time new regulations, and the practical interpretation of these new requirements are being addressed by states. As the legitimate arbiters of workforce development policy and implementation, state WIB chairs must navigate a labyrinthine, arcane system of public, private and non-profit entities to form sustainable partnerships dedicated to the betterment of their citizens. Likewise, they must seamlessly integrate new requirements promulgated by WIOA, while continuing to honor
and preserve program elements that supported a strong workforce system under the now retired Workforce Investment Act.

Despite the complexity of economic realities, some states exhibit consistent, pragmatic, and progressive workforce development programs. This study sought to understand the leadership experience of state-level WIB chairs from among those states which lead the nation in workforce policy and implementation. This study fills a gap in knowledge about leadership at the state level within the complex WFD ecosystem. While many of the findings and recommendations confirm prior studies of WFD programs and policies, this study advances knowledge by situating the inquiry at state level leadership, the legitimate seat of power in democratic society.

Beyond the practical lessons learned, and successful tactical and strategic approaches shared by state-level board chairs, another more nuanced perception emerged through this qualitative cross-case study. Perhaps colored by the 2016 political cycle, or merely representative of a trend that has been growing in society for decades, the discomfort displayed by participants with the inner workings of an inherently political appointment may have implications that transcend the workforce development context.

**Chapter Summary**

Chapter 5 presented a synopsis of the study’s design and the research findings organized around each of the four research questions. A discussion of how these findings support or negate leadership and political scholarship through the duel lenses of integrative leadership and regime theories follows. Implications of the findings for major stakeholder groups including America’s high-risk citizens, WFD system partners, and future WFD regulations are shared.
In addition, the chapter includes recommendations for workforce development praxis. Of primary concern are recommendations for the selection of state-level WIB chairs, as well as suggested methods for ongoing professional development within the WFD context. The sharing of current best practices, and the development of sustainable WFD structures that will continue to drive innovation and communicate what works best in workforce development are explored.

The chapter concludes with a recap of the study and the importance of ongoing research into this essential amalgam of American’s public, private, and non-profit workforce system. A system so vital to our economic health, the future success of our high-risk citizens, and our collective democratic ideals.
References


Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. HR 803; PubL 113-128 (2014).


Appendices
Appendix A: Telephone Script

Hello Mr./Mrs./Ms./Dr. [Name]:

My name is Martha Matthews Martin, and I am a doctoral student in Leadership, Policy, and Adult and Higher Education at North Carolina State University under the direction of Drs. Diane Chapman and Bradley Mehlendebacher. I am conducting a qualitative research study that will describe the perceptions of leadership complexity among state workforce investment board chairs from states with a legacy of progressive policy implementation. The Corporation for Enterprise Development reports that [STATE] has a legacy of promoting training services under WIA, as well as having a strong commitment to public education from early childhood, through primary, secondary, and postsecondary education. This combination of policy interpretation and long-term commitment to the citizens of your state places [STATE] as one of the nation’s most progressive states for workforce development issues.

I am recruiting individuals who are active chairpersons of progressive state workforce investment boards to participate in a short survey and a taped interview that will take somewhere between 30 and 90 minutes. With your assistance, I hope to understand the experience of leading a state workforce investment board through your lived experience. Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary, with no known risks or benefits. Furthermore, you may withdraw from this study at any time. If you do choose to participate, you will be asked to review and sign an informed consent, which relays that all communications will be kept confidential and that you and your state will only be identified by a pseudonym. I will not produce any documents that identify you.
Do you have any questions for me at this time? (If you agree to participate, schedule a time to conduct the interview during Q1, 2017.)

If you have any further questions for me, please contact me at [contact information removed] or through e-mail at [contact information removed]. You may also contact Dr. Diane Chapman at [contact information removed].
Appendix B: E-mail or Social Media Script

Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./Dr. [Name]:

My name is Martha Matthews Martin, and I am a doctoral student in Leadership, Policy, and Adult and Higher Education at North Carolina State University (NCSU). To fulfill the dissertation requirements for my degree, I am conducting a qualitative research study that will describe the perceptions of leadership complexity among state workforce investment board chairs from states with a legacy of progressive policy implementation. The Corporation for Enterprise Development reports that [STATE] has a legacy of promoting training services under WIA, as well as having a strong commitment to public education from early childhood, through primary, secondary, and postsecondary education. This combination of policy interpretation and long-term commitment to the citizens of your state places [STATE] as one of the nation’s most progressive states for workforce development issues.

I am recruiting individuals who are active chairpersons of progressive state workforce investment boards to participate in a short survey and a taped interview that will take somewhere between 30 and 90 minutes. With your assistance, I hope to understand the experience of leading a state workforce investment board through your lived experience. Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary, with no known risks or benefits. Furthermore, you may withdraw from this study at any time.

NCSU adheres to strict federal regulations when conducting research involving human subjects. If you do choose to participate, you will be asked to review and sign an informed consent, which relays to you that all communications will be kept confidential and
you, and your state will only be identified by an assigned pseudonym. I will not produce any
documents that identify you.

I am working directly under the supervision of Drs. Diane Chapman and Bradley
Mehlenbacher. Dr. Mehlenbacher is serving as the principal investigator for this study and
will oversee that all recordings and documents are handled as required by federal regulations.

Thank you for your consideration to participate in this study. If you have any
questions concerning this research study, please contact me at [contact information removed]
or through e-mail at [contact information removed]. You may also contact Dr. Chapman at
[contact information removed].

Warm regards,

Martha Matthews Martin

PhD Candidate

College of Education, NCSU

Raleigh, NC
Appendix C: Introductory Letter to Participant Pool

[Date]

Dear______,

Thank you for your interest in my dissertation research on workforce investment board leader perceptions of leadership complexity in governance. I value the unique contribution that you can make to my study, and I am excited about your participation. The purpose of this letter is to reiterate some of the things we have already discussed and to secure your signature on the informed consent form, which ensures ethical and correct research when human subjects are involved. Please sign the form and send it back to me either by e-mail or regular mail as soon as possible.

The research model I am using is a qualitative model through which I am seeking to understand individual experiences and perceptions. In this way, I hope to answer my research questions:

- **How do state-level WIB chairs from progressive states understand their role and the responsibilities they have been given under federal workforce legislation?**
- **How do these leaders perceive personal learning as a contributor to successful WFD leadership?**
- **From their perspective, what impact does the political environment play in their ability to effect change?**
- **How do they envision the role WIOA plays to shape future workforce strategies in their state?**

With your assistance, I hope to understand the experience of leading a state workforce investment board through your lived experience. Prior to your participation in the individual
interview, I will ask you to complete a short, 40-question survey. During the interview, I will ask you about your experiences and situations and important events you have experienced as a state WIB chair. I am looking for real, open, and vivid descriptions of your experience and of the people, places, and situations that have shaped your WIB experience.

I value your participation and thank you in advance for your time, energy, and effort to this study. If you have any questions about the study, please do not hesitate to contact me at [contact information removed].

Kind regards,

Martha Matthews Martin

Enc. (2) [Informed Consent Form, Self-addressed stamped envelope]
Appendix D: Participant Informed Consent

Martha Matthews Martin—Principal Investigator

[Date]

Dear Participant:

You have been asked to take part in the research project described below. The researcher will explain the project to you in detail. You should feel free to ask questions. If you have more questions later, Martha Matthews Martin, [contact information removed], the person responsible for this study, will discuss them with you.

Description of the Project

You have been asked to take part in the study that will investigate the perceptions of leadership with state-level WIBs with a legacy of progressive interpretation of Workforce Investment Act (WIA) operational parameters.

Details

• As the chair of a state-level WIB with a legacy of progressive policy implementation, you are being asked to volunteer for a research study.

• Your experience and perspective of success are critical to understanding the role leadership plays in WFD policy implementation at the state level.

• The analysis and conclusions of this research will be used to identify common and divergent perceptions among progressive state-level WIB leaders.

• There will be approximately five to eight persons enrolled in the study.

Procedures

If you decide to take part in this study, here is what will happen: You will be scheduled to attend one 1-hour session where you will be asked a series of questions
concerning your experience as a state-level WIB leader. This session may be conducted in person or over an electronic communication device (e.g., telephone, teleconference, Skype). There will be one meeting facilitator (e.g., the interviewer).

**Details**

- You will be asked to complete a short questionnaire prior to the 1-hour session.
- You will be responsible to answer the questions spontaneously and honestly.
- You will not be interviewed by, or in the presence of, any member of your WIB, supporting staff, or any member of state or local government.
- All interviewees will be shown transcripts of their interviews and will have the right to edit them to more accurately reflect the meaning of their answers.
- Interviews will be conducted during Q1 of 2017.
- You may be asked to participate in a follow-up session to review and validate the findings of the researcher. This meeting may last up to 2 additional hours and will be scheduled during Q2 of 2017.

**Risks or Discomfort**

There are no anticipated physical risks or discomforts associated with this research protocol.

**Benefits of This Study**

Upon successful completion of this study, a detailed description of the perceptions of state-level WIB leaders from progressive states will be analyzed for commonalities and differences. This information will be available as a published dissertation and may be referenced by scholars and policy makers as a guide for the future selection of effective WIB chairs.
Compensation

Participants will not be compensated for participation in this study beyond normal hourly or salaried rates.

Confidentiality

Your part in this study is confidential within legal limits. The researcher and university authorities will protect your privacy, unless they are required by law to report information to city, state, or federal authorities or to give information to a court of law. Otherwise, none of the information will identify you by name. All records will be coded and will not bear the name of the interviewee.

Treatments

Should a participant become ill or require medical treatment during the course of the interviews or other live sessions, assistance will be gathered by activating the local emergency response system.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

Participation in research is voluntary. You have the right to refuse to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions. Whatever you decide, you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Questions, Rights, and Complaints

If you have any questions about this research project, please call Martha Matthews Martin at [contact information removed] or e-mail her at [contact information removed]. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant in this study, please direct them to the North Carolina State University Institutional Review Board.
Consent Statement

By signing this document, you consent to participating in the research study “Workforce Development in Transition: Perceptions of Leadership Among Progressive State Workforce Investment Board Chairs” by Martha Matthews Martin, Doctoral Candidate, North Carolina State University.

This statement certifies the following: that you are 18 years of age or older and you have read the consent and all your questions have been answered. You understand that you may withdraw from the study at any time and that you will not lose any of the benefits that you would otherwise receive by withdrawing early.

All of the answers you provide to Martha Matthews Martin will be kept private. You should know that you have the right to see the results prior to their being published. A copy of the informed consent will be given to you.

__________________________________________  __________________________________________
Signature of Participant                           Signature of Principal Investigator

____________________________________________  __________________________________________
Typed/Printed Name                                 Typed/Printed Name

____________________________________________  __________________________________________
Date                                               Date
Appendix E: Semistructured Interview Guidelines

a. When appropriate, the interviewer will follow topical trajectories in the conversation that may stray from the guide; however, the interviewer will remain aware of the time limitations established with the interviewees and adhere to agreed-upon timelines.

b. Record interviews using a digital recorder such as a Flip Video or iPhone recording device. Handwritten notes by the researcher may be included on the interview form during the conversation.

c. Within 48 hours after the interview, audio recordings will be transcribed. Recordings will include nonverbal impressions (e.g., laughter, hesitation, emphasis) when appropriate. All information that would identify the interviewee or the state from which he or she is a WIB chair will be redacted.

d. Files will be renamed using the postscript “_REDACTED_DRAFT_[DATE]” and stored in the DRAFT folder using file password protection.

e. Transcribed files will be e-mailed to the interviewee for verification.

f. Files will be versioned with the postscript “_FINAL” after approval by the interviewee. Files will be transferred from the DRAFT to the FINAL folder using file password protection.
Appendix F: Participant Demographics and Survey and Interview Questions

1. Demographic questions
   a. Interviewee code number [to be assigned by researcher]
   b. State
   c. Years as WIB chair
   d. Previous local or state appointments
   e. Current employer
   f. E-mail address
   g. Current job title
   h. Formal education (e.g., highest degree and subject area)

2. Survey questions: Working Together: A Profile of Collaboration (OMNI Institute; adapted from Chrislip & Larson, 1994)

Instructions. Items are grouped into five categories. To the left of each item is a scale for recording your responses. Read the item, think about the extent to which it describes your WIB, and fill in the appropriate circle.
### Section 1: The Context of WFD Collaborations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>True</th>
<th>More True than False</th>
<th>More False than True</th>
<th>False</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Now is a good time to address the issues about which we are collaborating.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our collaborative effort was started because certain individuals wanted to do something about this issue.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The situation is so critical, we must act now.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Section 2: The Structure of WFD Collaborations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>True</th>
<th>More True than False</th>
<th>More False than True</th>
<th>False</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Our collaboration has access to credible information that supports problem solving and decision-making.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our group has access to the expertise necessary for effective meetings.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have adequate physical facilities to support the collaborative efforts of group and its subcommittees.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have adequate staff assistance to plan and administer the collaborative efforts.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The membership of our group includes those stakeholders affected by the issue.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Our membership is not dominated by any one group or sector. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐  
Stakeholders have agreed to work together on this issue. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐  
Stakeholders have agreed on what decisions will be made by the group. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐  
Our group has set ground rules and norms about how we will work together. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐  
We have a method for communicating the activities and decisions of the group to all members. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐  
Our collaboration is organized in working subgroups when necessary to attend to key performance areas. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐  
There are clearly defined roles for group members. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐  

**Section 3: Collaborative Members**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>True</th>
<th>More True than False</th>
<th>More False than True</th>
<th>False</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We frequently discuss how we are working together.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divergent opinions are expressed and listened to.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The process we are engaged in is likely to have a real impact on the problem.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have an effective decision-making process.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The openness and credibility of the process help members set aside doubts or skepticism.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>We set aside vested interests to achieve our common goal.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We have a strong concern for preserving a credible, open process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are inspired to be action-oriented.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| We celebrate our group’s successes as we move toward achieving the final goal. |

### Section 4: The Results of the Collaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>We have concrete, measurable goals to judge the success of our collaboration.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We have identified interim goals to maintain the group’s momentum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is an established method for monitoring performance and providing feedback on goal attainment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our group is effective in obtaining the resources it needs to accomplish its objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our group is willing to confront and resolve performance issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The time and effort of the collaboration are directed at our goals rather than keeping the collaboration in business.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Semistructured interview questions
a. Prior to receiving the invitation to participate in this study, were you aware that your state program was a leader in both public education outcomes and workforce development training provisioning?

b. Please describe the key responsibilities of your position as WIB chair.

c. What are the top three to five priorities of your board for this strategic planning?

d. What issues and challenges do you face day to day?

e. What are the primary challenges you will face in the next 6 to 12 months?

f. What are some of the obstacles to meeting the challenges you will face in the next 6 to 12 months?

g. How do you plan to address obstacles in the next 6 to 12 months?

h. With whom will your board need to collaborate to achieve goals in the next 6 to 12 months?

i. What do you think makes a state WIB chair successful?

j. Describe a problem you worked on that was handled or resolved successfully. What did you do? What worked for you? How did you feel about this?

k. Describe a problem that you worked on that was handled unsuccessfully or poorly. What did you do? What did not work for you? What did you learn from this experience? How did you feel about this?

l. Describe a frustrating situation you have encountered. What happened? How did you resolve it? How did you feel about this?

m. Provide an example of something you have done that exemplifies a positive contribution to the citizens of your state.

n. How do you see WIOA impacting your WFD strategy?
o. Are there any recommendations you would like to share with other state WIB chairs who may be challenged offering more training services pursuant to WIOA regulations?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Data Sources</th>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Empirical Indicator (Artifact or Interview Question)</th>
<th>Coding Classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do WIB chairs from progressive states understand their role and responsibilities?</td>
<td>Survey Questions 10, 11, 12, 13, 17, 20, 21, 23, 29, 30, 32, 39</td>
<td>Integrative Leadership</td>
<td>Describe key responsibilities of the WIB chair</td>
<td>Framing the Agenda</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Were you aware that your role was exemplar for WFD?</td>
<td>Ethical, Equitable Leadership</td>
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<td>How do you sustain collective action momentum?</td>
<td>Ethical, Equitable Leadership</td>
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<td>How do you manage conflict?</td>
<td>Ethical, Equitable Leadership</td>
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<td>What issues do you face day to day?</td>
<td>Ethical, Equitable Leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>How do WIB chairs from progressive states perceive personal learning as a contributor to successful WFD leadership?</td>
<td>Survey Questions 10, 11, 12, 13, 17, 20, 21, 23, 29, 30, 32, 39</td>
<td>Integrative Leadership</td>
<td>Rules of Order</td>
<td>Process Transparency/Fidelity</td>
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<td>Meeting Minutes</td>
<td>Process Transparency/Fidelity</td>
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<td>Performance Metrics</td>
<td>Managing for Results</td>
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<td>Were you aware that your role was exemplar for WFD?</td>
<td>Managing for Results</td>
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<td>How do you mobilize stakeholders?</td>
<td>Structuring Debates/Conflict</td>
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<td>With whom do you need to collaborate?</td>
<td>Convening the Group</td>
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<td>How do you manage conflict?</td>
<td>Process Transparency/Fidelity</td>
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<tr>
<td>From the WIB chair perspective, what impact does the political environment play in their ability to effect change?</td>
<td>Interview Questions</td>
<td>Integrative Leadership</td>
<td>What do you think makes a chair successful?</td>
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<td>Ethical/Equitable Leadership</td>
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<td>Describe a problem that was successfully fixed</td>
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<td>Describing the Group</td>
<td>Framing the Agenda</td>
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<td>Describe a situation when you were unsuccessful</td>
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<td>Describe a frustrating situation to be resolved</td>
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<td>Meeting Minutes</td>
<td>Managing for Results</td>
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<td>Provide example of personal contribution</td>
<td>Managing for Results</td>
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<td>Structuring/Debate/Conflict</td>
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<td>5-5 top priorities of WIB</td>
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<td>Establish Common Mission Vision</td>
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<td>Recommendations to other WIB chairs</td>
<td>Ethical/Equitable Leadership</td>
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<td>Establish Common Mission Vision</td>
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<td>Convening the Group</td>
<td>Managing for Results</td>
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<td>Challenges in the next 6-12 months</td>
<td>Framing the Agenda</td>
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<td>Convening the Group</td>
<td>Managing for Results</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>How do you think WIOA will impact strategy</td>
<td>Establish Common Mission Vision</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Framing the Agenda</td>
<td>Managing for Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do WIB chairs envision the role that WICA plays in shaping the future workforce strategy for their state?</td>
<td>Interview Questions</td>
<td>Integrative Leadership</td>
<td>Meeting Minutes</td>
<td>Managing for Results</td>
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<td>5-5 top priorities of WIB</td>
<td>Structuring/Debate/Conflict</td>
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<td>Process Transparency/Fidelity</td>
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<td>Recommendations to other WIB chairs</td>
<td>Structuring/Debate/Conflict</td>
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<td>How do you think WIOA will impact strategy</td>
<td>Process Transparency/Fidelity</td>
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<td>Framing the Agenda</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
WORKING TOGETHER:
A PROFILE OF COLLABORATION

A COMPANION
TO THE ASSESSMENT TOOL
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I. BACKGROUND

The Working Together survey includes 40 questions that utilize a Likert 4-point scale. Response categories are as follows:

1  "False"
2  "More False than True"
3  "More True than False"
4  "True"

The survey also includes four, open-ended questions:

1. Based on this and/or prior collaborations, what recommendations do you have for improving this group?
2. What do you think is working well in this collaboration?
3. What is your incentive now for participating in this collaboration?
4. What could we do to increase participation for you and/or others?

Working Together is a statistically valid and reliable instrument designed to measure issues known to be important to the effectiveness of collaborative processes. The tool is designed to provide groups with feedback regarding member perceptions and feelings about the collaboration. The survey includes the following five scales, or categories:

- The Context of the Collaboration
- The Structure of the Collaboration
- Collaboration Members
- The Collaborative Process
- The Results of the Collaboration.

OMNI Institute has been using Working Together: A Profile of Collaboration since 1992 in the evaluation and support of collaborative groups and processes.
II. PURPOSE

*Working Together: A Profile of Collaboration* may be used by groups to:

- Gain insights about member perceptions of how well the collaborative group process is working
- Surface specific areas of need to guide action and planning
- Provide a baseline measurement of the collaboration’s current effectiveness, and
- Serve as an evaluation tool to monitor progress.

III. THE RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF *WORKING TOGETHER*

*Working Together: A Profile of Collaboration* is:

- Statistically valid and reliable
- Accurately measures perceptions of issues known to be important for collaboration effectiveness
- Provides information about members’ perceptions and feelings about the collaborative group

How do we know the instrument measures collaborative effectiveness?

We learn about things by measuring them. Some things are easier to measure than others. Things such as age, sex, or income suggest obvious questions. We ask a person a question. The answer to the question is the measure. Some people answer our questions accurately. Some people answer inaccurately because they misunderstand the question, they do not know the answer, or they provide false information. When the answer is not accurate, we have measurement error. Measurement error is a problem because it means we are unable to learn about the thing by measuring it.

Complex things (such as collaboration, drug use, family bonding, and attitudes toward violence) cannot be measured accurately by asking only one question. To measure complex things we select and ask several questions. The response to each question provides some information about the thing we are trying to learn about.

Scaling is measuring something using many questions. A scale is a collection of questions where each question or item is trying to measure the same thing. As you may have guessed, measurement error is also a problem when we use a scale. No question is perfect, and even
all the questions taken together still will not guarantee we will accurately measure what we are trying to measure.

The fight against measurement error takes time, dedication and resources. There are two types of measurement error: validity and reliability. First we will discuss validity.

Think of measuring a thing as hitting the bull's eye on a target. If we have a tight pattern but we are off the bull's eye, we have low validity. With low validity, we are measuring some "thing" but it is not our "thing." We used face validity to help us decide if we are measuring what we intend to measure. Face validity is grouping questions together that appear to measure the same thing. In this instrument, we list all the questions under each scale or category so that you can judge for yourself whether we have face validity.

Once we had the questions grouped into scales by face validity, we wanted to explore the second type of measurement error called reliability. Reliability means that each question is measuring the same thing in the same way. Think of a reliable car. It goes anytime and anywhere. It is reliable, giving you consistently good results.

Think again of measuring a thing as hitting the bull's eye on a target. If we are on target but we do not have a tight pattern, we have low reliability. We may be measuring what we want to measure, but not very accurately.

IV. THE RESEARCH UNDERLYING WORKING TOGETHER

We selected Cronbach's Alpha as our standard for deciding the reliability of our scales. Cronbach's Alpha is not the only technique but it is well regarded and, therefore, enjoys widespread use among researchers. Cronbach's Alpha is based on the average correlation of questions within the scale. Correlation means to vary together. As the affirmative response to one question increases, for example, the affirmative responses to the other questions are expected to increase, as well. The correlation between questions can vary between 0.00 and 1.00, with 0.00 meaning no correlation and 1.00 meaning perfect correlation. Cronbach's Alpha averages the correlations and comes up with a measure between 0.00 and 1.00.

A high Cronbach's Alpha suggests low spatter around the bull's eye. If all questions were perfectly correlated with each other, the Cronbach's Alpha would be 1.00. If the questions had no correlation with each other, the Cronbach's Alpha would be 0.00. We use the Cronbach's Alpha to tell us if the scale is good enough to use. Do we believe the scale measures what we want to measure? To make this decision, we use the following, well-established guidelines:
How to Interpret Various Levels of Cronbach’s Alpha

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>Too good to be true– look at the questions, they must be identical.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.90 – 0.99</td>
<td>Incredibly good– celebrate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.80 – 0.89</td>
<td>Very good and worth a good party.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.70 – 0.79</td>
<td>Acceptable but hold off on partying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.60 – 0.69</td>
<td>Be worried, the measurement error is pretty high.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 0.60</td>
<td>You really don’t have a scale– stick to the items.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scale Reliability of the Working Together: A Profile of Collaboration Instrument

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale or Category of Working Together</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Context of the Collaboration</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure of the collaboration</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration Members</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration Process</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results of the Collaboration</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The alpha for the scale labeled “The Context of the Collaboration” is too low to assume that the scale is reliable. This is due to the low number of items in the scale and the tendency for respondents to rate the items relatively high. The items in this scale should be viewed independently.

Although we feel good about the reliability of our scales, the battle against measurement error is not over. You may be concerned that we did not measure what we say we are measuring. We have reproduced the questions within our scales so that you can judge the validity of the scale for yourself. Our goal is high validity, high reliability, and low measurement error.

For more information about the research underlying this instrument, please see:

V. DIRECTIONS FOR SCORING AND ANALYZING WORKING TOGETHER RESULTS

Step 1: To assess the group, the circles must be converted into numbers, called “scores.”

- If the answer is “True”, the score is 4
- If the answer is “More True Than False”, the score is 3
- If the answer is “More False Than True”, the score is 2
- If the answer is “False”, the score is 1

Step 2: Determine the average Group Member Score for each item.

- For each item, record the scores of all the group members
- Total the scores for each item
- Average the scores by dividing the total by the number of members who rated the item

Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item # 1</th>
<th>Member #</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>No response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Score</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of Members Responding</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Score</td>
<td></td>
<td>13/4 = 3.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The average response for each item can be displayed graphically by listing the questions in the “Y” axis and calibrating the “X” axis from 1 to 4. Draw a Bar to represent the average score for each item. We’ve provided an example on the next page.
Step 3: Determine the average Group Member Score for each Category.

- Add the average score for each item in the category and divide by the number of items

**Example:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category 1 – The Context of Collaboration</th>
<th>Item #</th>
<th>Average Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Score: 10.01

Total # of Items: 3

Average Category Score: $\frac{10.01}{3} = 3.34$

*Note: The Average Category Score can be displayed in a graph format as well. Here's an example of what this might look like.*
Average Category Scores

- The Context of Collaboration: 3.34
- The Structure of the Collaboration: 2.89
- Collaboration Members: 3.29
- The Collaboration Process: 3.27
- The Results of the Collaboration: 3.01
VI. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT

For more information, please contact OMNI Institute at:

899 Logan Street, Suite 600
Denver, CO 80203
303-839-9422
1-800-279-2070

FAX 303-839-9420
e-mail: omni@omni.org

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Appendix I: Selection Criteria

1. Participants in the study will be recruited from among state workforce investment board chairs who had a legacy of progressive implementation strategies as evidenced by (a) consistently providing training services to clients at rates greater than the national average under WIA regulatory guidelines and (b) states providing for the education of their citizens by investing in K–12 public education. These two factors are indicative of an agenda that supports workforce development at both short- and long-term time frames.
   a. WIB chairs will not be interviewed by, or in the presence of, any members of their board, support staff, or any other person(s) associated with their duties as the WIB leader.

2. Participants will be recruited from among the 14 states determined to have progressive WFD program implementations.

3. All state WIB chair participants will have a minimum of 1 year of WIB experience.

4. All participants will be fluent in English and read at a minimum of an eighth-grade level.

5. All participants will be at least 18 years of age and competent to sign legally binding documents.

6. All participants must be able to complete the questionnaire and participate in the 1-hour interview process during Q1 of 2017. Dates and times of interviews were negotiated between the participant and the researcher. Owing to financial and scheduling constraints, electronic devices were used to conduct interviews.