

HAMPDEN COUNTY WORKFORCE AREA

Executive Summary of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Plan

I. Introduction

The Regional Employment Board of Hampden County, Inc. (REB), in partnership with the Workforce Investment Area's Chief Elected Official, Mayor Domenic J. Sarno of Springfield, is required to prepare a plan for spending of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) funds that are being allocated to the region as an augment to our regular Workforce Investment Act funds. ARRA is intended to preserve and create jobs that align with economic recovery and economic growth through a significant investment of additional funding to expand the service capacity of the nation's workforce development system.

To that end, the REB will submit a plan for the utilization of the additional WIA and Wagner-Peyser funding allocated in conjunction with the requirements of the ARRA. The Local ARRA Plans will specifically describe the areas' use of additional funding for: Adults, Dislocated Workers, Youth, Wagner-Peyser services for both job seekers and employers, and Reemployment Services (RES) for unemployment insurance claimants.

We will receive approximately \$5.1M in additional ARRA-WIA funds which will provide workforce development and labor exchange services to more of our region's adults, dislocated workers, youth and employers. The ultimate goal of the ARRA funded services is to increase the employment opportunities and earnings of program participants and to improve the quality of the workforce and help stimulate the economy.

The Hampden County region will work to align utilization of our locally allocated ARRA funds, along with additional state and federal ARRA funds that will be available on a competitive basis, with the REB's strategic plan goals and objectives so that we:

- take a leadership role in integrating workforce development with initiatives that support business recovery and growth and enhance the skills of workers, particularly those that have lost their jobs during this economic downturn,
- align with adult literacy programs and services to integrate literacy with occupational skills training with workforce development, resulting in career directed employment opportunities,
- develop youth employability skills and
- increase key stakeholders' understanding of the pivotal role of workforce development in community and economic development and how ARRA funds are being used to support economic recovery through workforce development so that support for resources to expand public and private investment in the system continues.

The complete required Plan is also available on the REB's website at <http://www.rebhc.org>. Copies of the plan may also be obtained at the offices of the Regional Employment Board, 1441 Main Street, Springfield, MA 01103.

HAMPDEN COUNTY WORKFORCE AREA

Executive Summary of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Plan

II. ARRA WIA and One-Stop Allocations

The table below provides a comparison of current FY'09 allocations and the additional ARRA funds to show where increases are. FY'2010 allocations are not yet released.

WIA Formula Funds:

Grant Source	Hampden County FY'09	Stimulus Addition	New Total	% Increase
WIA Wagner Peyser	\$829,329	\$169,574	\$998,903	20.4%
Re-Employment Services	N/A	\$300,029	\$300,029	100.0%
WIA Adult	\$1,843,017	\$1,062,441	\$2,905,458	57.6%
WIA Dislocated Workers	\$1,405,849	\$1,046,740	\$2,452,589	74.5%
WIA Youth	\$1,998,002	\$2,562,282	\$4,560,284	128.2%
Total	\$6,076,197	\$5,141,066	\$11,217,263	84.6%

III. Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth and Wagner-Peyser Programs

Training is a priority of the REB and the workforce development system will spend at least 60% of ARRA Adult and Dislocated Worker program funds on training/education and support services to the individual participants.

Adults

Through the One-Stop Career Center (OSCC) system, adult job seekers will have access to a broad array of services from a comprehensive assortment of employment programs. WIA ARRA provides for basic core services, which are available to all job seekers, and additional intensive and training services are available to persons predicated on meeting certain eligibility criteria.

Examples of core services include:

- Orientation to the information and services available through the OSCC system.
- Career counseling as required, based on customer need.
- Initial assessment of skill levels, aptitudes, abilities, and supportive service needs.
- Job search and placement assistance, including interview preparation, resume preparation, job listings, resume listings, job clubs, and various job search workshops.
- Provision of information on employment and labor market statistics.
- Information and referral to job openings (including those posted on on-line job banks) and the hiring requirements of local firms.
- Program performance and cost information on eligible providers of training services.
- Assistance in establishing eligibility for obtaining financial assistance for training and other services.

Additional intensive and training services may be available, based on eligibility for various federally funded programs targeted to certain groups. For example, recipients of transitional assistance and certain economically disadvantaged adults may be eligible for occupational training and other specialized employment assistance programs. Low-income adults receive priority for ARRA WIA funded intensive and training services.

HAMPDEN COUNTY WORKFORCE AREA

Executive Summary of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Plan

Training opportunities for adults include a customer-choice driven form of training vouchers, called "Individual Training Accounts" or "ITAs" that will help pay for the costs of approved training programs. ITAs may be used to pay for approved Occupational Skills Training and/or Adult Basic Education (ABE) such as GED or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Based on funding availability, eligible individuals may receive up to \$5,000 in funding assistance for Occupational Skills Training or up to \$7,000 for a combination of Occupational Skills Training and ABE/GED/ESOL. Staff at the Career Centers assist in determining a job seeker's eligibility for training and guide them in the process of selecting a program from an approved list of providers.

Also, Hampden County will allow "On-the-Job Training (OJT)" opportunities for adults. OJT is occupation specific training provided by an employer for a limited duration. The employer will pay the WIA trainee a wage while engaged in productive work in a job that provides knowledge or skills essential to the full and adequate performance of the job. WIA will reimburse the employer up to 50% of the wage rate for the extraordinary costs of providing the training and for the related additional supervision that is required.

For ARRA, we are also able to plan to contract with institutions of higher education or other eligible training providers to provide group training where that does not limit customer choice and is a more expedient methodology to serve customers. We see potential for doing that in training for jobs in targeted emerging and/or high growth industries and which align with our regional strategic plans, such as in health care, "green jobs", precision machining and early childhood education through which we already have sectoral training initiatives in place in collaboration with institutions of higher education and which could also include a literacy component. Training for unemployment insurance claimants served under the new Re-Employment Services Program will also be a priority.

Additionally, ARRA allows for up to 10% of these funds to be spent on **incumbent workers** and the REB is exploring this option, targeting workers in the precision machining/manufacturing, health care and early childhood education sectors, who require upgraded skills in order to retain employment.

Support Services, including needs-related payments for eligible adults with no other means of support, will be made available to ensure participants can stay in a training program with reduced barriers to their participation.

- Approximately 180 individuals will be served with ARRA Adult funds.
- **ARRA Performance Goals for Adults (same as for WIA):**
 - Entered Employment Rate 79%
 - Employment Retention Rate 78%
 - Employment and Certificate/Credential Rate 68%
 - Average Earnings \$10,600
- The WIA system also coordinates with several non-WIA funding sources providing services to adults. Just a few of the examples include Department of Education funded adult education, post-secondary vocational education and vocational education activities; Mass

HAMPDEN COUNTY WORKFORCE AREA

Executive Summary of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Plan

Rehabilitation Commission and Commission for the Blind funded vocational rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities; and Title V services to older workers. The REB will also improve its capacity to serve homeless job seekers through expanded partnerships with agencies such as the Department of Mental Health and through coordination with city-led campaigns to serve the homeless such as those initiated by Springfield and Holyoke.

Dislocated Workers

Dislocated workers are those individuals who have been permanently laid off, or have received a notice of termination or layoff from employment. Dislocated Workers may receive the same ARRA WIA core, intensive, training and support services as those available through the adult grant. The training priorities as noted under services to adults, and the option for group training contracts, and the ability to use up to 10% of funds on incumbent workers similarly apply to dislocated workers. However, a separate funding stream is provided to pay for those services, as noted in the table on the second page of this plan summary.

- Approximately 190 individuals will be served with ARRA Dislocated Worker funds.
- **ARRA Performance Goals for Dislocated Workers (same as for WIA)**
 - Entered Employment Rate 86%
 - Employment Retention Rate 88%
 - Employment and Certificate/Credential Rate 74%
 - Average Earnings \$17,000
- There are also several other WIA and non-WIA funding sources assisting dislocated workers in addition to the “formula” funding found in the table on page two of this Executive Summary. Examples specific to dislocated workers include the State's Division of Career Services "Rapid Response" services, designed to respond to significant layoffs and plant closings; National Emergency Grants for targeted company lay-offs; and the provision of benefits, services and/or training through the Trade Adjustment Assistance and/or North American Free Trade Acts.

ARRA Youth Programs

The REB has a two year procurement cycle and service providers for WIA Youth programming were previously selected through a competitive Request for Proposals process. Pursuant to the intent of ARRA for youth, about \$1.2M funds are being added to the vendor programming in order to operate a **significantly ramped up summer jobs and work experience this summer**. Providers will target low income, at-risk youth that are 14-24 years of age. Consistent with the national and state emphasis on serving the growing population of out-of-school youth that are neither in school or working, we anticipate that **approximately 60%** of the youth funds will be targeted to serve out-of-school youth. The Summer Youth component will be followed, with whatever remaining funds are left, continued “year-round” services to ensure that youth further their education and employment goals. Older youth, ages 22-24, will be targeted for further work experience opportunities in the fall with ARRA monies since regular WIA youth funds can only serve youth up to age 21.

- Key services to **in-school youth** in the summer program are work experience and support services, combined with some dropout prevention; academic support; career and leadership development; and case management services. Primary outcomes for in-school youth after the

HAMPDEN COUNTY WORKFORCE AREA

Executive Summary of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Plan

summer are attainment of work readiness certificate along with return to high school or transition to employment and/or post secondary education.

- Key services to *out-of-school youth* in the summer program are work experience and support services, combined with some provide academic support; career and leadership development; and case management services. The primary outcomes for out-of-school youth are attainment of work readiness certificate as well as transition back to school, a GED program or employment.
- Youth that meet benchmarks for progress in meeting work readiness and employment goals may receive incentive payments. Also, ARRA youth will be assisted with support services needs such as bus passes and the purchase of work tools and clothing when needed.
- Approximately 850 youth will be served this summer.
- **Proposed ARR Performance Goal for Summer Only, ALL Youth:**
 - Workplace Readiness Skill Attainment Rate 84%
- **Proposed ARRA Performance Goals for Youth Year-Round:**
 - **Older Youth (19-21 years of age):**
 - Entered Employment Rate 76%
 - Employment Retention Rate 80%
 - Earnings Gain \$3,385
 - Employed-with-Credential Rate 49%
 - **Younger Youth (14-18 years of age):**
 - Skill Attainment Rate 84%
 - Diploma or Equivalent Attainment Rate 59%
 - Employment or Education Retention Rate 67%
- The REB will closely coordinate WIA activities with other youth programs and projects to leverage additional non-WIA funds and better align services, particularly with the state funded YouthWorks project which will place approximately 470 low-income, at-risk youth from Chicopee, Holyoke and Springfield into summer jobs. The REB will play a lead role in organizing community partners, including schools and the Massachusetts Departments of Social Services, Youth Services, Children and Families, Mental Health, Transitional Assistance, Rehabilitation Commission and Juvenile or Family Court to better coordinate services for youth.

Key partners in workforce development include the 4 School-to-Career "Connecting Activities" partnerships, encompassing 13 school systems and providing internships to about 1200 high-school youth annually. Holyoke Community College and Springfield Technical Community College will again provide academic support services for youth that have not passed MCAS and will lead the region's Tech Prep projects which are closely aligned with School-to-Career activities. In addition, the REB's privately funded "Center for Youth Internships and Employment" (CYIE) provides paid internships and jobs to youth through the County's One-Stop Career Centers.

HAMPDEN COUNTY WORKFORCE AREA

Executive Summary of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Plan

Wagner-Peyser

- Wagner-Peyser funded Employment Services provides universal access to core services as delivered through our One-Stop Career Centers as outlined above, plus an integrated array of labor exchange service activities between the job seeker and the employer community.
- Approximately 4,000 additional individuals will receive labor exchange services above the 22,000 the centers have currently served this FY. Of those individuals specifically seeking jobs, an entered employment rate ranging from 45% to 52% will be sought as part of the federal “common measures” metrics.
- Approximately 174 additional employers will be served above the 750 currently served this fiscal year with 88.5% of those posting jobs to the One-Stop system.
- Further, several non-WIA/Wagner-Peyser funding sources provide services to employers. Hampden County is very much involved with helping employers obtain grant funds to upgrade employed ("incumbent") worker skills via local and statewide grants. Examples include the Workforce Training Fund, Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund and continued Western MA activities in health care related training.

Re-Employment Services

This is a new funding stream and is targeted at the Unemployment Insurance Claimant only. All RES UI Claimants will receive a Career Center Seminar, a Triage or Mini-Assessment, development of a Career Action Plan and, at a minimum, one other service such as a referral to a high-quality employment opportunity.

- **Career Center Seminar/ Orientation** are the orientation and entry point for the programs and will outline career center services, claimant’s responsibilities and a *Job Search Readiness Inventory*.
- The purpose of the **Triage/Mini-assessment** is to review the *Job Search Readiness Inventory*, schedule the claimant for needed services, determine if the claimant has viable job skills, and begin to formulate a **Career Action Plan (CAP)**.
- If during the Triage/Mini Assessment it is determined that a customer requires additional skills and or training, the customer would be referred to training. These individuals will be a priority for ARRA funded training services.
- The CAP will document skills, identify any barriers and create the framework for the customer to achieve reemployment. CAP steps will include job search skills development (e.g. workshops, training), job referral, job development and and/or job placement assistance.
- A more in-depth assessment will be necessary for some claimants, especially those with deficient or out of date skills, those lacking educational preparedness and those who lack clarity on occupational goals.
- Job Match, Job Development, Job Referral and Job Placement services will follow once a customer has undergone an assessment and has a Career Action Plan, and the career center staff can work with the customer to match his/her skills with jobs.

Approximately 6,960 UI claimants will receive RES services with these additional funds through September 30, 2009, the first cycle of this new program.