

Program Year (PY) 2009 Local Operations Plan Modification Instructions In Response to American Recovery & Reinvestment Act of 2009

Background

On March 18, 2009, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Employment and Training Administration (ETA) noted in TEGL 14-08 that local plans may be out of date and not reflect the current economic downturn. In addition, local plan strategies may be impacted by the additional funding made available through the Recovery Act. As such, DOL/ETA released a Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 14-08 encouraging states, in part, to review their local plan modification policy and require local plans be modified according to state policy.

WIA state policy number 3625, Revision 1, dated July 2, 2004, provides instructions for local operations plan modifications for WIA Title I-B and Wagner-Peyser. A local area operations plan may be modified for a variety of reasons including changes in the methodology for service delivery, goals of the Workforce Development Council (WDC), or changes in local economic conditions. The Governor designated the Employment Security Department (ESD) approval authority over the modification of local operations plans. According to state policy, if the state requires all WDCs to modify their local operations plans due to changes in local economic conditions, the state is to provide written guidance on the requirements of local plan modifications.

Written Guidance on Local Operations Plan Modifications

As recognized by DOL/ETA, given the dramatic changes in our state's economic conditions and the infusion of new Recovery Act funding, ESD's WorkSource Standards and Integration Division (WSID) requires all WDCs to submit a modification to their WIA/Wagner-Peyser local operations plans by June 30, 2009. This modification is to be submitted as an addendum to the current PY 2007-2009 local operations plan, which has been extended through June 30, 2010. The plan modification is subject to public comment requirements noted under WIA regulation 20 CFR 661.350(8).

The purpose of the modification is for local areas to describe revised operations to meet the challenges of the economic downturn and the proposed use of the additional funds provided through the Recovery Act. The modification is to be submitted electronically to Melanie Matheney at Mmatheney@esd.wa.gov.

For written guidance and policy direction on Recovery Act funding for Activities authorized under WIA and Wagner-Peyser, the state defers to DOL/ETA TEGL 14-08 (pages four through 30). This TEGL provides written policy guidance on the use of:

- WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker funds provided in the Recovery Act;
- Wagner-Peyser Act funds included in the Recovery Act, including guidelines on reemployment services; and
- WIA Youth funds provided in the Recovery Act, including guidelines for summer youth employment Activities.

General Policy Guidance

As noted by DOL/ETA in TEGL 14-08, in utilizing the funding in the Recovery Act, federal, state, and local levels of the workforce system must be guided by four principles:

- Transparency and accountability in the use of Recovery Act funding;
- Timely spending of the funds and implementation of Activities;
- Increasing workforce system capacity and service levels; and
- Using data and workforce information to guide strategic planning and service delivery.

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Questions for WIA/Wagner-Peyser Act Local Operations Plan Modifications

In order to modify PY 2009 WIA/Wagner-Peyser Local Operations Plans, WDCs are to respond to the following questions using TEGL 14-08 as written guidance in providing answers. The questions below ask WDCs to describe their revised local operations plans to meet the challenges of the economic downturn and new Activities planned related to Recovery Act implementation. The answers to the questions should address how the local area plans to connect and integrate recovery activities to address both short-term and long-term workforce investment strategies.

1. How will the local area ensure that both the Recovery Act and regular formula funds are expended timely and concurrently to substantially increase the number of individuals receiving services?

- The NWC service provider staff have and will continue to work closely with state training institutions to leverage state Worker Retraining funds to expand the number of individuals receiving services. Under the Northwest Workforce Council's (NWC) direction, the Adult and Dislocated Worker service provider in this area has responded to the sudden increase in the unemployment rate and the expectation of the Recovery Act funding by increasing the number of dislocated workers and low income adults enrolled and registered for occupational training under Individual Training Account (ITA) support. This increase started in the third quarter of PY08 and continued into the fourth quarter. This initial support for training has come from remaining PY08 WIA Title IB and the Governor's Rapid Response Additional Assistance funds. These funds are expected to be exhausted by July 2009 and new training enrollments are already being funded using Recovery Act funds. Both WIA IB and Recovery Act funds will be used concurrently to meet the ITA obligations for support through PY 09 and to maintain the increased level of occupational training.
- The Northwest Workforce Area consistently has a proportionately high number of Adult and Dislocated Workers in training services. Last year this area had the highest percent of Adults in training, 62.8%, and the in the top quartile for Dislocated Worker in Training at 50.5%. Because this area has consistently high average numbers and percent of people in training, further increases may be more modest as compared to other areas.
- Using the PY 07 baseline figures provided by the Employment Security Department, there will be an anticipated increase of 18% in the number of low income adults expected to receive services. This increase must take into account that, as a result of a 30% transfer of DW funds into the Adult program in PY07, there were more funds expended on adult in PY07 than were available in PY08 or PY 09, including the addition of Recovery Act funds. Tuition cost is anticipated to increase by 7%.
- For dislocated workers, there will be an anticipated increase of 68%, over PY07 levels in the number of Dislocated Workers expected to receive services carried through PY08 and PY09.
- Youth will be served under a WIA IB year-round program and Recovery Act Summer Jobs Program. The intent is to full utilize Recovery Act funds for the Summer 2009 Jobs

Program. Any remaining Recovery Act funds will be available to expand youth program services through September 2010.

- The Northwest Workforce Area is responding to a rapid increase in job seekers during the second and third quarters of PY08 by working to increase the number of registrations, assessments and core and intensive services provided. During these two quarters, the number of job seekers increased 16.4%. Services increased by 10.6%. The number of UI claimants has been a major contributor to the job seeker increase, jumping by almost 52% during the same time period. The ARRA (Wagner-Peyser) funding will provide additional ESD staff assistance to help meet the increased customer flow.

2. How will the local area increase access to education and training opportunities for adults and dislocated workers needing new skills?

- The NWC's current training strategies, with its emphasis on classroom and employer-based occupational skills development, should adequately address the needs of both the long-term unemployed and those recently dislocated. The NWC provides excellent tools for the individual to assess their most appropriate training focus and provides sufficient case management and support services during training to ensure a positive outcome.
- Individual Training Account (ITA) funds are coordinated and leveraged with public funds as well as other local community resources to maximize resource utilization. The process used for customers to acquire a WIA 1-B and Recovery Act funded ITA has been coordinated with the Trade Adjustment Assistance Act and National Emergency Grant programs. The process requires the applicant to demonstrate efforts to access other resources including; Federal Financial Aid (PELL), community scholarships, academic scholarships and coordination with Worker Retraining funds available from community and technical colleges used as training sites. State Need Grants, Food Stamp Employment & Training, and Opportunities Grants are also included resources. This coordination of resources, as well as the utilization of personal resources of the applicant when available, forms a coordinated financial plan that maximizes scarce public resources, helping to ensure more individuals have access to training opportunities, including veterans, recipients of public assistance and low-income adults. The current ITA funding cap of \$3,500, which, given the coordinated and leveraged funding described above, appears adequate. There is no plan to increase funding caps or levels at this time.

3. Has the local area reviewed existing eligible training providers' and their capacity to meet the current and near-term projected needs for additional training enrollments in demand courses?

- Consultations with each of the Northwest's community and technical colleges regarding training capacities in high demand programs are ongoing. In recent meetings with Bellingham Technical and Skagit Valley Colleges the availability of training slots, class

group projects, and new training programs, including “green jobs” were discussed. We have identified opportunities for establishing possible new training cohorts in Practical Nursing, and ESL/I-BEST Practical Nursing, Welding certifications, and I-BEST Marine Welding. Electrician training will also be explored.

- Continuous engagement with the Northwest’s community and technical colleges, aided by strong working partnerships, helps ensure the talent needs of the region’s business and industry are reflected in training programs and contemporary curriculum. No completely new training programs are forecast at this time.

4. Describe the local plan for increasing access to reemployment services for UI claimants identified as most likely to exhaust their benefits?

- The Northwest Workforce Area is reaching out to 100% of the claimants filing for initial UI benefits and those filing extended benefits, offering re-employment services. All claimants receive a full work registration and initial assessment to help determine appropriate pathways for re-entering the workforce as rapidly as possible. The number attending job clubs has doubled in some locations and referrals to jobs for qualified UI claimants are an increased focus. ARRA funds have added two additional staff to support service delivery to the UI claimant population.
- The labor-exchange business services team is focusing on increasing job orders that match the claimant population skill sets. Employment Security Department ARRA funds have provided a temporary business services staff person to enhance this effort.

5. Describe local strategies and policies to ensure adults and dislocated workers, including UI claimants have universal access to the minimum required universal core services?

In this response, local areas should address:

- core services for adults, dislocated workers, including UI claimants and target populations, especially those populations given preference in the WIA adult program under the Recovery Act for recipients of public assistance and other low-income individuals including Veterans and eligible spouses.
- any proposed changes to the delivery of front-end services.

- **Description of Services**

The services provided by the Employment & Career Development Division of ESD are provided to assist job seekers, especially job seekers with barriers to employment, find suitable employment and access ongoing skill improvement resources in order to succeed throughout their working lives. For purposes of this WIA and Wagner-Peyser Operations Plan update, these services will (1) assist job seekers with barriers to employment to realize improved employment outcomes, and (2) provide quality services to businesses to assist in the location and hiring of job seekers.

Core Services:

The core service component provides tools to assist the job seeker make an effective job search.

These services may include any of the following: Business outreach, SKIES registration, initial job readiness evaluation/assessments, job referrals, employment referrals, staff assisted job match, service orientations, Job Search Reviews, Labor Exchange, Job Hunter, Bonding Assistance, Labor Market Information, WOTC Certification, Training and Re-training Information, Rapid Response, Referrals to Partner Programs and Community Resources.

Intensive Services:

Intensive services are provided through direct interaction with service delivery staff.

The intensive services tier is geared to provide more in-depth job search and career management assistance.

WorkFirst, Veterans Employment, Food Stamp, H2-A and H-2B, Disability programs are examples of programs that require intensive services to customers, most of which are guided through federal requirements.

Initial Assessment: (Desk-level Interview)

Assist customer in determining employment and or career development pathways by job readiness and skills assessment.

Job Referrals:

As part of the coordinated effort, ESD staff will provide labor exchange services: job referrals, employment referrals, staff assisted job match and will provide placement and career counseling for Veteran's Employment Programs, Claimant Placement Program, Labor Exchange, Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker Services, WorkFirst customers and the general public.

Labor Market information:

Provide labor market information (e.g., job vacancy listings, providing occupation information e.g. demand, decline or balance, information on job skills required; information on demand occupations).

UI Information:

Provide basic information regarding filing for unemployment compensation. Identified UI liaisons will assist claimants' access the automated systems and telephone (KIOSK) located in resource room. All WorkSource and Affiliate sites at a minimum are required to provide phone accessibility and internet connections so that potential UI customers can file for unemployment insurance benefits.

UI Liaisons may be located at designated WorkSource Centers and Affiliates to assist those UI claimants with disabilities file claims and answer basic questions.

Locations without UI Liaisons on site direct claimants to the UI KIOSK/phone and connect to the tele-center.

Referrals To Financial Aid:

Sharing of eligibility information and next step guidance for financial aid assistance to potential candidates interested in attending training. Financial assistance may be offered by WIA, TAA, local training providers, community and technical colleges or others.

Employment Readiness Job Hunter Workshops:

ESD staff will provide a series of employment readiness modules as part of core services to all job seekers that are accessing employment services through WorkSource sites where ES staff are co-located. The six modules include orientation, knowing one's self, skills and ability analysis, the job market, effective job search, applications and resumes and interviewing.

During the presentation for benefits and rights (UI claimants) orientation ESD staff present an overview of all training programs and opportunities offered through the WorkSource system and WorkSource partners. Referrals to training are documented in SKIES by Employment Security staff at that time of the interview. This is especially effective for identifying dislocated and adult workers.

Business Services:

The overall employer-services outcomes are to provide excellent comprehensive services to businesses and jobseekers, transitioning job seekers to viable new employment as quickly as possible and helping employers to solve their human resource problems by directly providing or brokering information, tools, services, and resources they need to be successful. Increased outreach efforts and networking opportunities will lead to stronger relationships between the business community, SBA and WorkSource partners and increase the Business Services Team's ability to recruit employers for WorkSource hiring and recruitment events and better understand hiring needs and trends across industries.

Within the Northwest WDA, ESD staff will work collaboratively with partners within the context of the **Northwest Regional Business Services Plan** to identify and deliver pertinent, value-added services available from the WorkSource Northwest partnership of organizations and programs. ESD staff will work to increase quality job orders, to narrow the inventory gap between desired

occupations and available opportunities, and to identify steps to meet business recruiting and placement needs. ESD business services staff will utilize available data, such as job seeker inventory and O*Net codes, to customize and concentrate services to better match job seekers and available jobs.

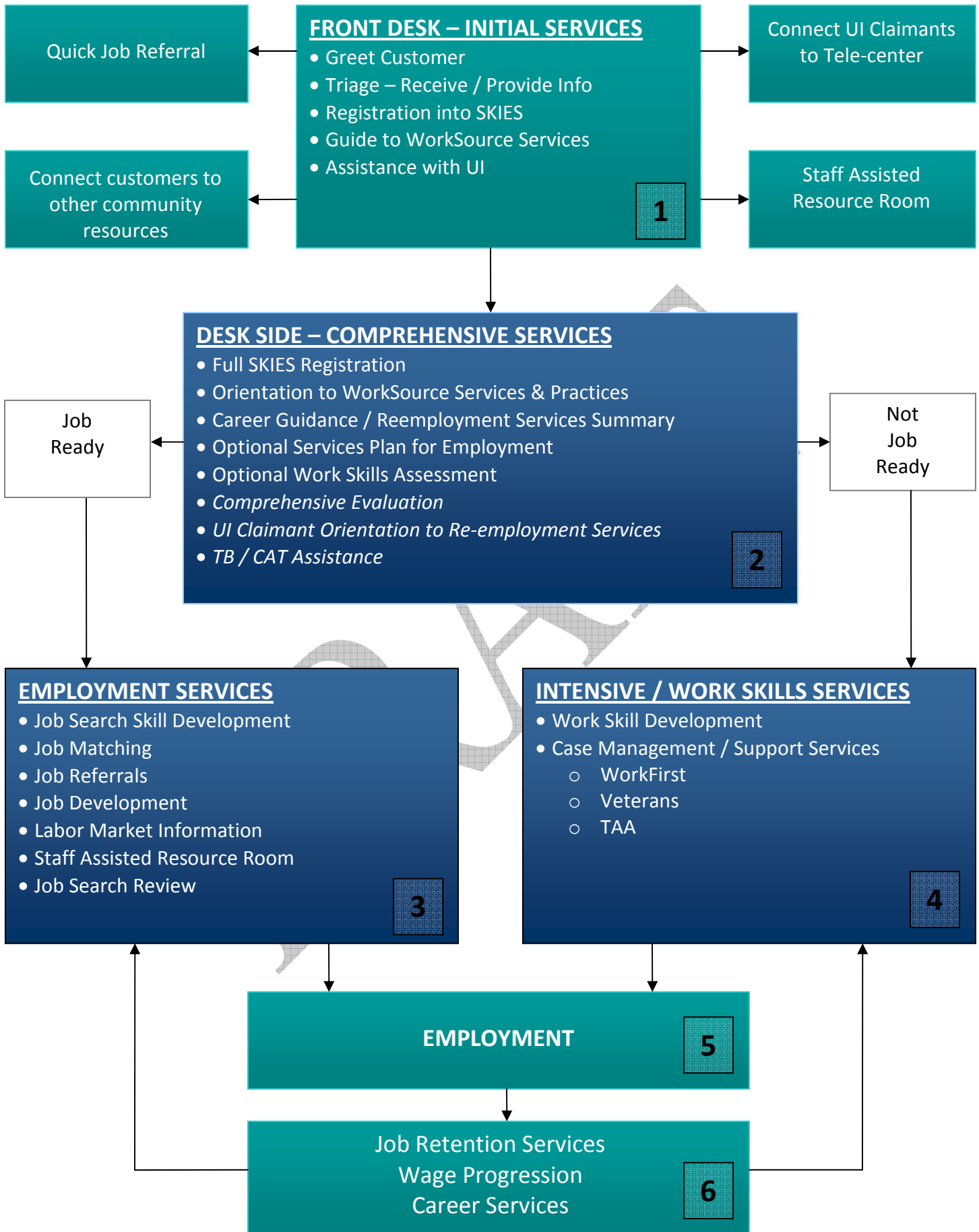
ESD business services teams will collaborate within the context of the **Northwest Regional Business Services Plan** with local partners and the regional LMEA economist to identify targeted industries and occupations with projected job openings and training needs that match the job seeker inventory.

Methods for Referrals

ESD staff will assist with referrals and access to information to local community based organizations, partners and programs; such as income assistance, housing, food, or medical care.

A detailed flow diagram regarding the referral process to be used by ESD staff follows.

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6. Describe how ARRA funds will enhance local integrated service delivery strategies in the following functional areas: front-end, skills/employment, and business-services.

- The newly redesigned front-end service delivery model will benefit from ARRA funds, as additional staff levels will be available to provide quick job referrals, assist customers with UI benefits-related issues and provide support in Resource Rooms. ARRA funds will expand capacity to deliver core and intensive services to the increasing number of universal customers through increased staffing. As a result, an increased number of customers will receive a full array of core services including initial assessments, employment counseling, services plans, referrals to training, job skill development, job matching, job development and job referrals. Business services will benefit through an additional labor exchange business services lead person who, in addition to employer outreach, will work closely with the local partnership within the context of the *Northwest Regional Business Services Plan* to provide a comprehensive menu of coordinated services to businesses and job seekers.

7. Describe local efforts to target training to regional economies, including high growth and emerging industry sectors and awarding ITAs for careers in energy efficiency, renewable energy, “green” collar jobs, and health care as discussed in the Recovery Act?

- The NWC targets available WIA and ARRA training funds to the region’s high growth, high demand industry sectors. This approach has proven effective for the region as measured by exceptional performance outcomes over time and ongoing industry engagement with workforce development activities. Health care and allied occupations, for example, received 55% of WIA training dollars from 2005- 2008. Training in advanced manufacturing occupational skills received 33% of the training dollars in the same period. These ITAs include Process Technology, HVAC, and Electromechanical Engineering, all of which have significant green economy implications and employment characteristics.
- Both health care jobs and green jobs are vital to the economic growth of Northwest Washington. The health care industry is responsible for more than 10 percent of all employment in the region. Short-term occupational growth data indicate 23 percent of all short-term job growth in the WDA will occur in health care occupations. Of the 40 occupations with the fastest short-term projected job growth in the region, health care related occupations appear 28 times. In addition, the average annual growth rate of all of these occupations is at least 3.0 percent, more than three times the expected growth rate of all occupations in the region.
- Recent studies indicate the primary concentration and growth of green jobs will be in industries and occupations not normally considered exclusively “green collar”. The green component of existing jobs and occupations is the most likely area for workers’ skill growth. New job classifications for green jobs are yet to find their way into the data, so predicting regional growth of these jobs is uncertain, at best. In the Northwest, construction and trades, engineering and design, production, transportation, agriculture and operating managers represent the occupations with the highest concentration of green jobs. Regionally, the short-term growth prospect for these combined occupations is nearly zero percent. When the economic recovery occurs, occupations in these industries will again be in demand. Training in the green aspects and green skill sets within these industries will be emphasized through classroom and work-based curriculum revisions recommended by industry demand.

- The region's emphasis and reliance on advanced manufacturing offers opportunities to build marketable skills in the region's labor force in such areas as; energy efficiency, renewable energy, carbon based composites, process control, pollution prevention and environmental mitigation.

8. States are to ensure that supportive services and needs-related payments described in WIA section 134(e) (2) and (3) are available to support the employment and training needs of priority populations. Will the local area offer supportive services and needs-related payments (NRPs) to eligible adults and dislocated workers?

- The NWC Supportive Services for Adults, Dislocated Workers and Youth Policy WIA 01-11 (last revised September 2008) and the Needs-Based (Related) Payments System policy # WIA 01-09 (revised August 2008) ensure that these services are available to meet the needs of priority populations. The NWC has the demonstrated capacity to accurately disseminate and track needs based payments to adults and dislocated workers.

9. How the local area will deliver summer youth components including employment opportunities that include work experience? Describe the anticipated program design for the summer youth program including the time period involved.

- The design framework for Services to Youth age 16-24 follow that in the current Operations Plan with service opportunities targeted to summer work experiences (internships) starting in May 2009 and extending through September. The NWC will offer Summer Jobs experiences at host worksites throughout Whatcom, Skagit, San Juan and Island counties. Internships are planned-structured learning experiences that take place in a workplace for a limited period. Work experiences may take place in the private for profit, non-profit, or public sectors. Internships are designed for the youth to gain exposure to the working world and its requirements. Internships help youth acquire an understanding of personal attributes, knowledge, and skills needed to obtain and advance in employment and the opportunity for career exploration and skill development. Summer Internships will be subsidized at no less than the Washington State minimum wage and may include the following elements:
 - Instruction in employability skills or generic workplace skills such as the employer defined Workforce Skills Standards.
 - Exposure to various aspects of an industry
 - Progressively more complex tasks;
 - The integration of basic academic skills into work activities;
 - Supported work, work adjustment, and other transition activities;
 - Other elements designed to achieve the goals of work experience.
- Internships develop individuals' job skills and career opportunities and priority sites are with employers in the Northwest's key industries: health and allied services, marine industries, and advanced manufacturing, including energy-related and wood products. Worksites at the area's apprenticeship technical training centers are also a target.
- All eligible youth and young adult participants receive an assessment of basic skills, work readiness, and career awareness and interests. A directory of available job placements is provided to the participant, and, with staff guidance, they select worksites of interest for a hiring interview. This selection process promotes the selection of worksites that offer insight into careers and occupations of interest.

- Job descriptions include Workforce Skill Standards and Foundation Skills to help ensure the work experience encompasses learning applicable to future employment. An emphasis on transferability of these skills and occupational skills and the possibility of a professional reference will also support youth and young adult career opportunities.

10. To what extent does the local area plan to complement youth work experience with classroom-based learning?

- The NWC does not plan to have a direct link between summer employment and academic learning. However, worksite supervisors are asked to regularly work with participants in describing/demonstration the link between work and academics.

11. Describe how the local area will oversee youth Activities and summer employment, and train staff in implementing the various aspects of summer employment, including appropriate wage and hour provisions, child labor laws, and work site supervision and safety?

- The WDC has Summer Youth coordinators hired in each of the region's three WorkSource centers to oversee youth employment activities. NWC administrative program managers and deputy director supervise the summer employment staff and activities.
- New staff have been thoroughly trained on the program design and the regional processes to support its effective implementation. Summer Jobs Program documents, manuals, and supporting materials have been updated for use and are contemporary with employment law and practice. These include the Host Agency Application Packet, the Worksite Memorandum of Agreement, the Job Description Template, the Worksite Agreement and the Service Plan. Additionally, the Supervisor Manual and the Intern Handbook were updated to reflect current program guidelines.

12. Does the local area plan to ensure that every youth has the opportunity for developing and achieving career goals through education and workforce training including the youth most in need of assistance?

- As part of the service delivery process, there is an active recruitment of all groups identified in the TEGL 14-18 detailing the most in need and most at risk youth and young adults to be served by the ARRA summer jobs program. These outreach and recruitment strategies include: linking with target population service providers and stakeholder collaborations serving these targets groups, print media articles, web advertising, and program posters placed strategically throughout the community.
- All youth, including those most in need of assistance, will be introduced to career pathways and educational preparations to achieve career goals through their direct interaction with employees on the job in supervisory and mentoring relationships. Continued communication and collaboration with target population service providers and stakeholders will facilitate wrap around services to meet individual needs. Examples include the transition of the Building Bridges at-risk student cohort into summer internships and collaboration with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to provide support and develop worksites appropriate for youth with disabilities. Youth and young adults will also be introduced to WorkSource and the career exploration and assistance available through the workforce development system.