

Priorities within Recovery Act Workforce Development Provisions*

Our goal is to ensure that the Recovery Act resources help steer the state out of this recession and make Illinois a compelling and competitive place to do business. We believe that doing so will require coordination of agencies and services, access and equity for all workers, and clear career pathways that educate Illinois' workforce to meet the coming demand for workers in middle-skill jobs.

Coordination: Because workforce training dollars are contained in so many provisions of the Recovery Act (e.g., WIA, TAA, TANF, healthcare and healthcare informatics, weatherization, state stabilization, and youth employment and training, and others), it provides a unique opportunity for Illinois to build its workforce infrastructure and strengthen the state's economy. We are pleased to know that the Governor's office has taken leadership in coordinating the policy response from state agencies and urge the state to continue that leadership by reaching out to and involving community-based organizations (CBOs,) community colleges, local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), and other workforce entities. With this coordination, Illinois will be able to maximize the range and quality of workforce development services available and ensure that they are linked in an integrated workforce development system that best serves the needs of all Illinois workers and businesses.

Access and Equity: We realize that Illinois is facing the challenge of improving the economic well-being of minorities, women, and low-income people, in addition to welfare recipients, immigrants, and other hard-to-employ populations, while at the same time serving the needs of incumbent workers and workers that have recently lost their jobs. But the employment prospects of these historically underrepresented populations in the high-wage construction-related jobs (which make up a significant portion of the jobs created under the Recovery Act), must be addressed. It is critical that the state have plans to actively recruit minorities, women, and other targeted populations into *non-traditional* occupations and that it make a concerted effort to create jobs for women and minorities in those occupations. It is also important that the state balance its investments across sectors. In addition, supportive services will need to be specifically targeted to these priority populations in order to ensure their participation in training programs and to help them maintain their workforce participation.

Career Pathways: An expansion of training programs that put people on career pathways is critical to ensuring that Illinois provides the skilled workforce needed to retain and attract businesses to the state and rebuild a healthy economy. Our state has the advantage of having a broad-based workforce development system of workforce investment areas, community colleges, community-based organizations, and other workforce entities. With the unprecedented opportunities provided in the Recovery Act, this is an ideal time for Illinois to strengthen its foundation and align efforts to move workers out of training and into quality jobs. For some workers this requires clear career pathways that move them into better quality, better paying jobs in the long term; for some, it includes bridge programming linked to a career pathway; for some, it requires a therapeutic model that ensures a greater likelihood of success; and for others, it requires support and wrap-around services so they can fully participate. Research on successful bridge models has found that there is high interest among workforce development entities in partnerships that enhance the success of workers. This is the time for Illinois to create those partnerships and strengthen the pathways to careers.

Transparency: The state stands to gain not only from ensuring that the ARRA implementation process is transparent, inclusive, and efficient but also from ensuring that the outcomes are transparent. Illinois was the first to post its efforts on <http://recovery.il.gov> and we look forward to having this central, online resource that provides meaningful information not only on the

number of jobs created under the Act but also the type and quality of those jobs (e.g., total hours of work generated by broad occupational categories, number of workers, total payroll and extent of healthcare coverage.)

We will be participating in the regional forums hosted by DCEO and welcome the opportunity to be involved. Sustaining and inviting community involvement throughout this process will help ensure that state uses the Recovery Act to rebuild its economy and make Illinois an attractive place to do business.

Recommendations

1. As the Governor's office brings state agencies together, we think there should be a role for CBOs, ICCB, and WIBs, to provide input so that coordinated efforts to provide workforce development and training will be effectively implemented locally. We are eager to join you at the policy table and willing to offer our support to help make Recovery efforts a success for all Illinois workers.
2. We strongly encourage the Governor's office to ensure the involvement of the community colleges and promote and assist collaborations between community colleges and community-based organizations. We suggest an assessment of community college and CBO program capacities as a first step to identifying partners and opportunities statewide. We also suggest the provision of technical assistance to colleges and CBOs who want to establish such partnerships.
3. Among the opportunities for serving targeted populations, Illinois should make an investment to secure TANF emergency contingency funds through the Recovery Act. We would like to see this commitment and investment included in the Governor's budget proposals.
4. The state should take advantage of this opportunity to ensure equity and access by making a concerted effort to create training and jobs for targeted populations that address the occupational segregation in high-paying construction jobs. The state should also balance its investments by expanding the number and improving the quality of jobs traditionally held by women and people of color.

Priority Questions

1. What are your plans for coordinating across state agencies? Across types of ARRA workforce investments?
2. What are your plans for facilitating partnerships and aligning efforts across workforce entities?
3. What is your plan for reaching target populations in the Act and balancing the need to serve these workers with the need to serve incumbent and recently unemployed workers?
4. How will you go about coordinating wrap around services to ensure that targeted populations receive the support and assistance they need?
5. What places do you see where the workforce development pipeline needs to be strengthened?
6. What is the state's plan for providing greater direction to and technical assistance for community colleges and community based organizations?
7. How will the state publicize the training and job opportunities presented within the Act?
8. How will the state implement the green jobs, weatherization, and other construction-related provisions to ensure that women, minorities and other targeted populations share in the benefits? For example, what are your plans for actively recruiting women and minorities

into these jobs that have traditionally attracted male workers? What are your plans for creating jobs in these sectors for targeted populations?

Compiled collaboratively by: Women Employed, Center for Economic Progress, Center for Tax and Budget Accountability, Chicago Jobs Council, Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, Chicago Urban League, Good Jobs First – Illinois, Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights, Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, Instituto del Progreso Latino, Jane Addams Resource Corporation, and Sargent Shriver National Center for Poverty Law.

Additional Questions

1. We understand from your previous handout on ARRA that there is \$4.7 billion available nationally for "Broadband and Wireless" of which "DCEO has identified a total of \$118 million" in a number of areas including "broadband development." Could you tell us what the plan is for that? Will it help bridge the digital divide particularly for low-income, minority, and immigrant populations in the State?
2. Is there any information available regarding implementation of the new Trade Adjustment Assistance Act? A lot of major changes were made, including extending coverage to impacted service workers. It seems like it would be even more important to get the word out about how eligibility is established, and the benefits available if eligibility is determined.
3. Are there any plans to incorporate into State RFPs the Linguistic and Cultural Competence Guidelines that were developed and piloted this past Fall? They were commissioned by the State's Office of New Americans and developed by Millennium Consulting with a group of not-for-profit state service providers including Instituto.
4. When will the state submit its application for State Stabilization Funds and what office is preparing that application? What percentage of the funds received will go to public higher education institutions?
5. How is the state strategizing around WIA and other competitive grant provisions? Is there a plan to provide technical assistance teams to work with organizations to submit proposals and facilitate partnership within a community?
6. How will class-size contracting be promoted and utilized to serve the targeted populations, for example, in providing bridge programs? How can support services be provided to the group as a whole, whether through community colleges or by a CBO? One of the bridge pilot lessons was the importance of a transition coordinator, which could perhaps be provided with these funds.