

WORKFORCE *plus*

WORKFORCE SERVICES PLAN 2009-2010

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WORKFORCE SERVICES PLAN 2009-2010**I. Context, Vision, and Strategy**

- A. Economic and Labor Market Context - Provide a detailed analysis of the local economy, the labor pool, and the labor market context. (§112(b)(4))

WORKFORCE *plus* provides services in Gadsden, Leon and Wakulla Counties. The Region includes two (2) rural counties; however, Gadsden County has been hardest hit by the economic downturn with business closures impacting more than 500 individuals in a single county. Gadsden County's unemployment rate for June 2009 was 10.6 as compared to 5.7 in 2008; Leon County's unemployment rate for June 2009 was 7.2% as opposed to 4.6% in 2008; and Wakulla County's unemployment rate for June was 7.2% compared to 4.5% in 2008 for the same time period. It should be noted that the June 2009, unemployment rate was the highest for the month of June dating back to 1990. Out of a labor market force of \$182,622, there were 13,919 unemployed residents in the region. Total nonagricultural employment was down 3,600 jobs over the year in the Tallahassee metro area. Industries that lost jobs over the year were: trade, transportation, utilities, mining, logging, construction, financial activities, information and professional/business services, manufacturing and other services. Industries gaining jobs over the year included government, leisure and hospitality, and education and health services. Education and health services expanded at a faster rate over the year in the region than in the state.

WORKFORCE *plus*' labor pool is comprised of both low-skilled and highly skilled workers. In years past, the Region has been limited in the numbers of dislocated workers that could be served due to the individuals being able to gain employment in a relatively quick timeframe and not need additional services. Due to the economic conditions and the limited number of job openings, the region has started to see an increase in the numbers of dislocated workers accessing our services for skills upgrade training as well as soft skills training due to the competition for jobs in the area.

WORKFORCE *plus* understands the need to work with regional partners to address economic growth and labor shortages and works closely with all stakeholders to collectively service area employers. The region remains competitive due to the advantages of the physical location neighboring several other states which results in employers and customers accessing services in Florida.

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B. Overarching Local Strategies - Describe the strategies that are in place to address the local strategic direction, local priorities, and workforce development issues identified through the local economy.

1. How the local workforce investment system resources, both stimulus and regular formula funds, can and will be used to serve the increased numbers of workers in need.

Regular formula Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funds, Wagner Peyser (WP) funds, as well as American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds will be used to support dislocated workers, unemployment claimants, unemployed and under employed adults, and older youth with increased access to universal services as well as financial assistance for retraining opportunities. The region will also use special project dollars as awarded and in accordance with the contract in order to serve additional customers. **WORKFORCE *plus*** will provide assistance to customers in completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) which is another funding source for customers seeking training assistance.

WP ARRA funding will be used to increase staff that provide assistance in **WORKFORCE *plus***' workforce center resource rooms. The region continues to see an increase in traffic coming into the centers and in numbers accessing services. **WORKFORCE *plus*** has increased staff so that more personal attention can be given to individuals seeking services. The region continues to evaluate the frequency and types of workshops and assessments in order to meet the needs of customers.

2. How adults and dislocated workers, including low-income adults, who need to acquire new skills will have increased access to education and training opportunities.

Over the past few years, **WORKFORCE *plus*** has not had the financial capabilities to serve large numbers of individuals who sought assistance with training or retraining. **WORKFORCE *plus*** closely monitored the number of customers placed in training to ensure that the region did not exceed budget capabilities. The region transitioned from serving individuals that were within 200% of poverty to serving only those who met poverty guidelines so that the focus would be on providing much needed services to the unemployed and underemployed. Due to the allocation funding received under the stimulus grant, **WORKFORCE *plus*** will increase training enrollments through the Workforce Investment (WIA), employed worker training and on-the-job training programs.

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3. How the RWB will address a dual-customer approach, meeting the skill needs of existing and emerging employers and high-growth occupations, as well as the needs of under-skilled adults.

WORKFORCE *plus* targets high growth occupations as part of the training provider and program selection process for the customers. Current participants enrolled in training prior to ARRA funding will remain enrolled in WIA formula funded services and will continue for the duration of their training. Individuals accessing services after the receipt of the ARRA funding will be dual-enrolled under ARRA and WIA formula; however, if the ARRA formula funds become fully expended and/or expire, these customers will continue receiving services under the WIA formula based grant.

WORKFORCE *plus* will also utilize funding received from any special project grants to pay for costs associated with training as allowable under the grant requirements. **WORKFORCE *plus*** also reached out to area training providers for the development of short-term training programs so that customers could obtain certifications and enter employment in a short period of time.

4. How workforce activities (e.g., adult education, job training, postsecondary education, registered apprenticeship, career advancement, needs based payments, and supportive service activities) will be aligned in career pathways both now in implementing the Recovery Act and in the transformed workforce system of the future.

As mentioned in the previous passage, workforce activities will be aligned using all funding streams in order to better serve the customer. Support services are made available to individuals enrolled in training and all individuals enrolled in WIA are required to complete the Federal Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Needs-based payments have not been implemented due to the extension of unemployment payments and also in lieu of the support service that **WORKFORCE *plus*** provides.

All services are in support of demand occupations that lead to a self-sufficient. Individuals who are in low wage, low skill occupations that are identified through accessing universal services are considered for referral to WIA services. If the individual is eligible and could advance through career pathways based on assessment data, the individual is served through WIA.

Through ARRA funding, **WORKFORCE *plus*** has increased staff support to the region's workforce center resource rooms so that more individual attention and support can be furnished to the increased numbers that staff are seeing on a daily basis. By providing this additional staff support,

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individuals are less likely to fall through the cracks during the process and more likely to access the services they need that will lead to obtainment of self-sufficient employment.

5. How the RWB will partner to develop workforce solutions with community colleges, business and labor organizations, registered apprenticeship program sponsors, civic groups, and community organizations to align workforce development strategies and align workforce strategies with strategies for regional development and shared prosperity.

The Chief Executive Officer for **WORKFORCE *plus*** is continuously working with organizations in the region to increase partnerships that will benefit our mutual customers. **WORKFORCE *plus*** serves on many advisory boards in a capacity that lends way to being able to have a voice in the services offered in the community and ensures that the region is focused on the needs of the community. **WORKFORCE *plus*** established the Reinvest Local Advisory Council which includes partners from various organizations and provides guidance and direction to address the needs of individuals who are receiving ARRA funded services.

All activities are to ensure that workforce strategies are aligned with strategies within our community that provides assistance with moving individuals out of poverty and into economic self-sufficiency. All organizations are working to ensure community coordination and communication lines remain open with everyone understanding the direction our community needs to take to increase regional strategies to increase the prosperity of the region.

- C. Service Delivery Strategies, Support for Training - Describe innovative service delivery strategies the RWB has or is planning to undertake to maximize resources, increase service levels, improve service quality and achieve better integration.

1. Increase services to workers in need.

Workers in need are identified as those workers who lack the knowledge, skills, abilities, or support mechanisms to rapidly return top employment and acquire sustainable high skill jobs. All **WORKFORCE *plus*** service delivery centers provide comprehensive delivery of services to this population via the following activities or services: assisted and unassisted job search, resource room services, computer access, access to Florida's job bank (EFM), Provelt comprehensive assessment tools, resume writing classes, job search workshops, individual counseling, disability navigator services to assist individuals with disabilities, education and training based on local demand high growth/wage occupations, referral to vocational rehabilitation as well as

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vocational training. Additionally, **WORKFORCE *plus*** encourages offenders to participate in Federal Bonding workshops that are offered weekly in the various offices to facilitate their transition into gainful employment. **WORKFORCE *plus*** also uses the Business Services Team to increase employer penetration resulting in job opportunities through employed worker training and on-the-job training.

2. Support the full range of One-Stop Career Center customers in acquiring the skills needed to attain jobs in high growth, high-wage industries and occupations, including such support services, needs-based payments basic skills remediation, English as a Second Language (ESOL), and other supportive services.

In order to support the full range of workforce center customers in acquiring the skills needed to attain jobs in high growth, high wage industries and occupations workforce has made changes in service delivery. **WORKFORCE *plus*** has increased the number of staff delivering services in the region and realigned staff duties to better serve the numbers accessing our services. The region will continue to gauge the numbers accessing services to determine if additional staff is needed.

WORKFORCE *plus* staff refer customers to English as a second language and basic skills remediation when needed as part of its comprehensive delivery of services.

To facilitate the customers' access to high growth/high wage industries and occupations, **WORKFORCE *plus*** is working to expand its training services with the inclusion of shorter-term training programs which offer certifications. The region already offers training programs that are considered short-term but considering the economy, individuals are looking at training opportunities of three (3) months or less where they can complete a program and enter the workforce quickly. **WORKFORCE *plus*** also has established an in-house training academy that provides a variety of training options to our customers. One of the most utilized classes is the basic computer skills class. This class helps those customers that we serve who lack computer skills which compound their ability to complete job search activities.

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3. Ensure education and training delivered through the workforce system results in education and workforce skills of demonstrated value, and focus assessments and certifications towards the next level of education and employment.

WORKFORCE *plus* works to ensure that education and training delivered through the workforce system results in educational and workforce skills of demonstrated value. Our customers are able to take advantage of increased workshops, specialized assessments and career decision making assistance. **WORKFORCE *plus*** encourages employers to use the Provet system which includes up to 1000 different assessment options and can be customized to meet the needs of the employers. **WORKFORCE *plus*** continues to explore educational service options that will meet the needs of the customers in achieving their employment objective. **WORKFORCE *plus*** has also increased services to employers and customers through employed worker training and on-the-job training initiatives. This helps to secure the retention of employed workers and the creation of job opportunities for those unemployed.

4. Strategically use youth, dislocated worker and adult funds to quickly deliver innovative services.

WORKFORCE *plus*' plan to quickly deliver creative and innovative services to youth, dislocated workers, and adults includes the following:

In an effort to reach additional populations in a quick manner, **WORKFORCE *plus*** is looking at instituting WIA orientations for groups in order to expedite intake an enrollments. To meet increased universal customer demand in our workforce centers, **WORKFORCE *plus*** will determine whether additional workshops are needed in order to meet the needs of our customers. **WORKFORCE *plus***' training academy will also play a significant role in the employment development of youth, dislocated workers and adults through the offering of various short-term training opportunities. **WORKFORCE *plus*** continues to be a leading force in the provision of outreach services offered through radio and creative television advertisement. As mentioned previously, **WORKFORCE *plus*** has expanded OJT, customized and employed worker training opportunities in anticipation of increased workforce demands resulting from increased economic development efforts. The region recognizes that the economic downturn will rebound and the region needs to have a prepared workforce when that occurs.

WORKFORCE *plus* used Recovery Act funding to initiate a summer youth program to provide work experience, work readiness skills, and income for

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up to 500 economically disadvantaged youth ages 16 through 24 years of age. **WORKFORCE *plus*** Initiated an RFP process to identify and select a service provider for the summer youth employment program.

5. Provide targeted work experiences in order to prepare individuals for job opportunities in new industries or occupations, particularly using registered apprenticeship and on-the-job training for all jobseekers, and summer work experience for youth.

In an effort to prepare individuals for employment opportunities in new industries, the region has initiated the following procedures: Increased emphasis on business staff to provide expanded employer outreach resulting in more OJT and EWT opportunities, expanded OJT to all industry groups to increase high growth/high wage opportunities for job seekers, and provided an OJT dollar value that facilitates employer participation in OJT. Finally, **WORKFORCE *plus*** has used ARRA funding to initiate a summer youth program to provide work experience, work readiness skills and income for up to 500 economically disadvantaged youth, ages 16 through 24 years of age.

6. Align workforce activities with education strategies and economic and community development strategies to meet skill needs of jobs and industries important to the local and regional economies and meet the needs of under-skilled adults.

WORKFORCE *plus* continuously reviews demand occupations, related training courses and the associated eligible training providers, Labor Market projections, and economic forecasting information to ensure that the region maintains its hand on the pulse of the area community and its needs. Every effort has been made to ensure that all financial assistance for training programs are in areas considered to be demand occupations.

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WORKFORCE SERVICES PLAN 2009-2010**II. Service Delivery****A. Local Governance and Collaboration**

1. Describe how the local partners involved in the workforce investment system *interrelate on workforce economic development, and education issues.*

Services provided under ARRA for the adult, year-round youth, and dislocated worker programs will be aligned with current services under the regular WIA programs. To promote transparency of the use of WIA regular funding and ARRA funding, training opportunities will be expanded to serve more adults, dislocated workers, and older youth. Through community partnerships and the region's Business and Employer Services team, **WORKFORCE *plus*** is aware of new businesses moving into the area, expanding businesses, additional training needs due to current economic conditions, an expansion of training courses offered through our educational partners, and ongoing communication among community based organizations seeking assistance for their customers. **WORKFORCE *plus*** participates on many of the regional partners' advisory boards which lends way to the providing outreach services about services that are available to our mutual customers.

2. Describe the steps the RWB will take to improve operational collaboration of the workforce Investment activities and other related activities and programs outlined in section 112(b)(8)(A) of WIA at the local level (e.g., joint activities, memoranda of understanding, planned mergers, coordinated policies, etc.).

Steps taken to improve collaboration include **WORKFORCE *plus***' creation of a Reinvest Local Advisory Council which helps staff and the community to understand the intent and use of the stimulus dollars. The service provider who provides services under Wagner Peyser and WIA formula funded services is the same provider for ARRA services which ensures there is knowledge of what services can be provided and to what level. **WORKFORCE *plus*** considers all the services and funding streams available for use when serving the customer base in order to best provide the services that meet the needs of customers and thus eliminating barriers. The collaboration is very important to ensure non-duplication of services in our area. **WORKFORCE *plus*** has memorandums of understanding and key referral processes in place with other organizational entities that provide services which are beneficial to our customers. All community organizations involved are providing information on eligibility criteria, customer flow processes, confidentiality requirements and local policies so that each organization understands their specific processes. This ultimately results in a more planned and accessible flow of services to customers.

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B. Reemployment Services and Wagner-Peyser Act Services

Section I.

1. How RES will be coordinated with other services provided at the One-Stop Career Center under WIA. Describe any changes to the reemployment services including the ARRA funded services that will be provided to unemployment insurance claimants and the Priority Reemployment Planning (PREP) services that are provided to include a discussion of the increased numbers of ARRA job seekers entering the One-Stop Career Centers. Also describe how PREP will advance the local ARRA funded RES efforts. For those RWBs participating in the Re-employment and Eligibility Assessment Program pilot please also describe how this effort will be coordinated with RES.

Due to staffing limitations, previous PREP services had to be limited to an orientation of local workforce services where the U.C. claimants were responsible for self-initiated reemployment services. Within the past year, the U.C. recipients have increased significantly in the region. In response to this increase and in coordination of ARRA implementation, **WORKFORCE *plus*** has expanded staff assisted services and Priority Re-Employment Planning activities. These services include one-on-one staff assisted services, initial claimant reemployment assessments, career guidance and individual counseling, provision of labor market information, occupational skills information, referral to job openings, formal assessments to include testing, counseling and employability plans, and referral to training provided by WIA funds. The provision of ARRA funds will allow for more focus on providing more intensive services to walk-in customers for the purpose of providing reemployment services.

WORKFORCE *plus* will target those individuals designated as being eligible to receive extended UC benefits as one of the primary groups to receive intensive and aggressive reemployment services.

WORKFORCE *plus* is participating in the Re-employment and Eligibility Assessment (REA) demonstration program as well which allows the region to provide specialized services to a target population with the intent of expediting their return to employment through intensive services such as employment-focused assessment and individual employment plans.

Based on results of initial PREP assessments, claimants are referred to activities with coordinated services between WIA and other workforce staff to also include staff-assisted job search, job search workshops, resume assistance and workshops, interviewing techniques workshops, labor market information, vocational and career counseling, vocational interest and

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assessments, and referral to education or training. PREP advances the local ARRA funded RES efforts through early identification and referral of U.C. recipients (most likely to exhaust their benefits) to workforce services tailored to expedite their return to employment and enhance their skill sets to increase their ability to compete in today's workforce.

2. How UI claimants will be identified quickly and RES provided as early as possible following initial receipt of UI benefits or referrals through UI profiling systems. What methods will be used to assess claimants to identify the mix of interventions and services for different groups of UI claimants.

Potential UI claimants are identified through indicators in the initial registration in the State job bank (EFM), local Rapid Response activities, as well as the State UI PREP notification system. Rapid response activities include an orientation of re-employment and re-training services as well as methods to apply for UI. Potential UI claimants are provided a menu of services to include: job seeker registration, access to job postings, resume, interview, job search and other workshops, labor market information to include high demand/high skill/high wage jobs in the region, and available re-training opportunities through WIA.

PREP activity identifies those claimants that may exhaust U.C. benefits. Each week, WORKFORCE plus reviews and schedules identified claimants for PREP activities. In order to serve the claimants most likely to exhaust benefits, a large number of claimants are required to attend orientation and seek intensive services if needed. Those claimants who are currently enrolled in the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) program and who have received reemployment services recently are excluded from the PREP pool.

As part of the PREP Orientation, claimants complete an initial face-to-face assessment to identify preliminary strengths and barriers toward obtaining employment. Claimants considered job ready (i.e., those that demonstrate knowledge, skills, abilities for immediate employment in a demand occupation, possess a resume, demonstrate job search and interview skills, and have no significant barriers) are scheduled for staff assisted job search. Claimants not considered job ready are referred for further assessment or more intensive re-employment activities. Methods of assessment include: one-on-one interview with a career consultant, Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE) to determine functioning educational levels for training purposes, and career exploration.

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3. The model used to ensure that UI claimants receive the full array of services as indicated above, including an enhanced level of service in the one-stop career centers. The description should include all services that will be provided under RES, including in-depth services such as skill assessment, career guidance, individual service plans, labor market information, job clubs, expanding UI profiling systems for referring UI claimants through the one-stops, etc.

As mentioned above, the models used to ensure that UI claimants receive the full array of services are primarily Rapid Response events and UI PREP activities. The services provided under RES include staff assisted job search, initial assessment to determine strengths and barriers to employment, skills identification and assessment via the Employ Florida Marketplace skills analysis and ONET Connector which identifies transferable skills, vocational interest assessments, face-to-face vocational/career counseling and guidance to include creation of individual service plans, labor market information, job search workshops, resume workshops, interviewing techniques workshop, and referral to education or training. Additionally, **WORKFORCE *plus*** holds job fairs in January, April, and June and Employer Spotlight events throughout the year. UI recipients are provided basic information on accessing the State job bank (EFM) and are sent messages through this system of new job opportunities. **WORKFORCE *plus*** also sends biweekly email blasts to all registered customers in the region notifying them of Hot Jobs in the region.

4. How the RWB will use information from the enhanced FLUID-EFM interface to provide enhanced services.

Work has begun at the state level to create an enhancement FLUID interface for UC to provide the claimants email address (where it is provided) and to send additional elements which are necessary to initiate a full Wagner Peyser application, including employment history. Once the FLUID-EFM enhancements are in place, the system should create a full Wagner-Peyser application for all UI claimants in addition to the basic system registration. The email address will be used for automated outreach to each claimant to invite them to access the system and complete a resume. The same automated email and/or subsequent email can inform the claimant of job listings in the system that matches his/her job skills and employment history. Plans are for UC to begin asking for the email addresses for those clients registering in person or by phone so that these claimants can realize the same benefits as those who register o-line. Local staff will then be able to identify new UI registrations and notify claimants of reemployment services within a

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few days after their UI registration. Staff members are currently conducting file searches for the purpose of matching customers with available jobs.

5. The specific population among UI claimants (including exhaustees and those most likely to exhaust benefits) that the RWB intends to target with Recovery Act funds for RES. Also describe the process used by the RWB to effectively serve UI claimants and businesses in need of a job ready, LMI connected workforce. Describe how the RES process will be coordinated with other services provided at the One-Stop Career Center under WIA. How will staff collaborate with UI to identify claimants who would benefit most from RES or WIA services?

WORKFORCE *plus* intends to target all UI claimants including exhaustees with Recovery Act funds for RES.

These claimants will be identified via UI PREP activities, Rapid Response events, and the planned UI FLUID and EFM interface. Services previously described above will be offered to claimants.

WORKFORCE *plus* strives to connect businesses with a job ready workforce via the Employ Florida Marketplace website and assorted recruitment activities. Staff daily review new job orders, job match with UI claimants, and notify claimants of openings through various communication methods. Biweekly emails are sent to all registered individuals advertising "Hot Jobs" as well as any upcoming recruiting events. Job fairs and Employer Spotlights events are held throughout the year. The Business and Employer Services team interfaces with area businesses, agencies, and chambers of commerce to link job seekers and employers. Business and Employer Services staff work closely with the WIA team to facilitate the match between participants exiting training in demand occupations with those employers who are hiring.

6. How the RWB intends to integrate information technology into its RES program to better identify and serve UI claimants, including the percentage of funds that will be used for integrating ES and UI technology requirements to identify and serve the needs of UI claimants.

WORKFORCE *plus* intends to utilize the following information technology systems to identify and serve UI claimants: UI FLUID and EFM system, ONET occupational skills system, Ready to Work assessment and credential tool, and the Proveit system for screening purposes for area employers. The region intends to utilize 62.5% of its ARRA Wagner Peyser Program funds on reemployment services including staffing, orientation and assessment.

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7. Any labor market information tools that will be funded and integrated into RES.

WORKFORCE plus will utilize the existing Florida Labor Market Information system to provide information to UI claimants to help them make future employment decisions and set goals. This information will consist of demand occupations, trends, areas of future growth, occupational wages, etc. so that the customers can make informed decisions.

8. What type(s) of training will be provided to one-stop center staff on assessments, UI profiling, LMI, technology, etc., to help staff understand how to use and apply the tools to target RES and increase proficiency.

The provider in the region holds weekly morning staff meetings in order to provide training and updates on planned activities and events. *WORKFORCE plus* has a designated Assessment Unit which may be utilized to provide assessment, ProveIt testing, Ready to Work, etc. to UI claimants. PREP staff is trained in initial assessment as well as other areas. Staff members also present the area's resume workshops, interviewing workshops, bonding workshops, etc. so they are well trained to deliver the needed services under RES.

Section 2 - Describe how the RWB will ensure the three-tiered service delivery strategy for labor exchange services for job seekers and employers authorized by the Wagner-Peyser Act includes: (1) self-service, (2) facilitated self-help service, and (3) staff assisted service, and is accessible and available to all customers at the local level. (§112(b)(17)(a)(i).)

In order to ensure that jobs generated through the Recovery Act are accessible and available to all customers, describe how the RWB will facilitate the listing of such jobs on the State Job Bank.

WORKFORCE plus will utilize several online systems to promote self service capability of job seekers and employers. Employ Florida Marketplace (EFM), the state's job bank system provides the following self service functions for job seekers: labor exchange, labor market information, career exploration, skills set and occupational information, resume preparation, education and training links, and other services. Likewise, in EFM, employers have access to labor exchange, labor market information, training and recruitment information, tax credits, labor law links, and other employer services. Both employers and job seekers may access services from any computer that is linked to the internet and computer access is available in all workforce centers in the region. The *WORKFORCE plus* website www.wfplus.org also links to available services.

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Facilitated self-help service is available by contacting the workforce centers in the region. Job seekers receive guidance through self help websites either by phone, email or services in our resource rooms. Types of service include facilitated help with resumes, job search, links to training providers, and links to web-based community resources. Group activities such as resume preparation, job search activities, and interview skill classes are also provided. Employers receive similar assistance such as web-links to labor market information, occupational descriptions, job order creation, and web access to tax credits and other employer services.

Assistance is also available for those individuals and employers needing intensive, staff assisted services in each full service workforce center. Employers may receive complete staff assisted services including but not limited to: registrations, job order advertising, testing, and screening, on-the-job training, I-9 and alien certification, federal bonding, and other employer services. Job seekers receive help in the form of staff assisted registration, resume creation, job search and job development, individual interview coaching, assessment, career exploration, vocational counseling, and other face-to-face individual services. All of the above mentioned services are available and accessible to all employers and job seekers by contacting/visiting **WORKFORCE *plus*** workforce centers.

To ensure that jobs generated through the Recovery Act are accessible and available to all customers, **WORKFORCE *plus*** will facilitate the listing of such jobs on the State Job Bank (EFM) in the follow manner: new self-service and staff assisted job orders will be monitored by the Business and Employer Services team and employers will be contacted to determine if the job is considered created through the Recovery Act. Should the job be generated through the Recovery Act, it will be designated as such in the State Job Bank (EFM). File searches are conducted and biweekly "Hot Jobs" are sent through email blasts to registered individuals in the region.

C. Adult and Dislocated Worker Services

1. Describe local strategies and policies to ensure adults and dislocated workers have universal access to the minimum required core services as described in §134(d)(2).

The RWB should address core services for adults, dislocated workers, and target populations; especially those given preference in the WIA Adult program in the Recovery Act (recipients of public assistance and other low-income individuals).

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2. Describe how the RWB will integrate resources provided under the Wagner-Peyser Act and WIA Title I for adults and dislocated workers, as well as resources provided by required One-Stop partner programs to deliver core services. (§112(b)(17)(a)(i).)

The RWB should address how it will integrate resources provided under the Recovery Act, the Wagner-Peyser Act, and WIA Title I for adults and dislocated workers, as well as resources provided by required One-Stop partner programs. For example, how will the RWB use these resources to provide significant funding for low-income and low-skilled workers that help them access the services and training needed to pursue family-supporting jobs.

Within the **WORKFORCE *plus*** workforce centers, the universal customers (including adults, dislocated workers and all targeted populations who are visiting for the first time) are directed to the Customer Service area where job seekers have the opportunity to register in the Employ Marketplace (EFM). Customer Support staff are available to assist and answer questions regarding the EFM registration process and ensure that registrations are entered correctly. Customer support staff provide first time visitors with an overview of seekers and a monthly calendar of events to familiarize new customers with workforce services.

WORKFORCE *plus* resource rooms provide customers with computer, internet connectivity and print resources. Resource Room Specialists are available to answer questions and assist customers when needed. Resource room specialists also encourage customers to utilize other workforce services such as computer skill workshops, job search workshops, WIA orientation, Veteran's services, etc. and will refer customers to a Career Consultant as necessary. In addition to computers, the Resource Room offers accessible equipment for persons with disabilities.

Customers who are unable to utilize the workforce centers due to a lack of computer skills, lack of literacy skills, language barriers, disabilities, or other significant barriers to employment are referred to the centers; staff assisted services. The staff assisted services include but are not limited to: staff assisted core services, registration, job search, resume preparation, interviewing skills, educational and vocational counseling, assessment, and other staff assisted services.

WORKFORCE *plus* provides several workshops within core services to improve customer job search skills and employability. All workshops and activities are posted in monthly calendars available to the customers. The workshops include, but are not limited to the following: Resume Writing I and II, Interviewing

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Techniques including How to Dress for Success, Mock Interviews, and Federal Bonding.

The universal customer (which includes dislocated workers, WIA Adults, and special populations) will be provided job information, preliminary testing/screening and labor market information as initial services. **WORKFORCE *plus*** encourages customers to be independent and set employment goals that lead to self-sufficiency thus reducing the need for dependency on forms of assistance. Individuals receive job development opportunities and/or referrals against job orders. Job file searches are conducted to facilitate selection and referral of job applicants. Some customers are able to handle their own employment needs with the use of the EFM, self-registration and the systems extensive web-based resources. However, the majority of customers with barriers require more specialized staff assistance and the services needed are more intensive. This approach promises not only to better serve individual needs but also increases staff efficiency. Job placement services shall be provided throughout the above process, and employment will always be emphasized as the expected outcome or goal for individuals. Training through an approved training vendor is an option if the customer is unable to find employment due to lack of marketable skills, dislocation, etc.

3. Describe the RWB's vision for increasing training access and opportunities for individuals including the investment of WIA Title I funds and the leveraging of other funds and resources. (§112(b)(17)(a)(i).)

The RWB should describe how it will increase training access and opportunities for individuals, including the investment of WIA Title I funds and Recovery Act funds, and the leveraging of other funds and resources. How will the RWB's contract with and use contracts with institutions of higher education and other training providers to maximize funds to the greatest benefit.

Please refer to **WORKFORCE *plus***' local Workforce Services Plan, 2007-2009, for information pertaining to services for WIA funded individuals.

In addition, **WORKFORCE *plus*** uses a multitude of assessment tools to determine individual interests and abilities regarding potential training and/or to provide direction and career guidance.

All activities for WIA, TAA, WP, Vets, UI Re-Employment, etc. are co-located and support all services allowed within the specific funding source for each program. As these programs have common components such as job development, career counseling, case management, assessment/screening, and labor market information, whenever possible, staff from all programs work together to complete these duties. **WORKFORCE *plus*** oversees cost allocations

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for all programs to support the blending of programs and services to the extent allowable by law. Funding sources such as Recovery Act, WIA and TAA, support WP activities to the extent that they benefit those programs with like or similar services. WP funding, as well as UI Re-employment, does not traditionally cover the expense of all WP related services; therefore, other programmatic staff do support common unassisted and assisted core services as well as intensive services.

- 4. The RWB should describe its models/templates/approaches for service delivery in the One-Stop Career Centers, particularly whether it is adjusting its approach to deliver increased levels of services with funds received under the Recovery Act.
 - a. Describe the method of organizing service delivery for Business customers in the One-Stop Career Centers.

WORKFORCE plus understands that our businesses and employers are our primary customer. By working to ensure that the employers are satisfied with our services, there is assurance that the connectivity between job seekers and employers will expand and maintain sustainability. The Recovery Act funds have provided the opportunity to increase services to businesses through on-the-job and employed worker training opportunities. These additional funds have already resulted in the unsubsidized placements for the region and retention of jobs. *WORKFORCE plus* will continue to strongly advertise available services through various methods of communication in order to reach the customers in the region. The Provet assessment system has been marketed to employers as a tool that can be utilized for candidate screening.

WORKFORCE plus has an Executive Center in its Administrative Office which can be used by employers as needed for conducting interviews, etc.

- b. What assessment process will be utilized in the One-Stop Career Centers?

The function of the assessment process is to determine customer needs and actions required to obtain long term gainful and sustainable employment. Job seekers who register through our workforce offices receive an initial needs based assessment. As customers maneuver through the job search process and needs/barriers are identified, job seekers (such as dislocated workers or low skill/low wage customers) have the opportunity for additional and more intensive one-on-one assessments through the services of a career specialist or possible assessment utilizing career exploration tools. Those customers determined to be in need of training may receive interest surveys and the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) to determine need for

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remediation prior to entering a training program. All assessments focus on identifying needs/barriers to employment and ensuring there is a plan developed to reach self-sufficient employment.

- c. What approaches will be used to ensure funds are targeted to those most in need, including low-income assistance recipients, persons with disabilities, etc.?

WORKFORCE *plus* has three (3) staff identified to work with customers with disabilities to assist them in navigating through the job search and employment process. These individuals serve as extensions for outreach to other agencies and community based organizations that provide services to the disabled populations as well as to assist other staff members in our workforce centers to better understand the needs of the disabled who access services through **WORKFORCE *plus***.

Due to the level of funding received under the Recovery Act and under our regular WIA formula funding, **WORKFORCE *plus*** has the ability to increase the numbers served. **WORKFORCE *plus*** will maintain its focus on those most economically disadvantaged and require individuals to meet the established poverty guidelines for eligibility determination for the Adult Program as well as youth. Funding for the Adult WIA program is limited under the Recovery Act and will be combined with formula funds to help pay for expenses associated with training.

WORKFORCE *plus* recognizes that with the extension of UI benefits, it may be more difficult to recruit dislocated workers for retraining until near the end of their benefits. This is a barrier that all RWBs will be faced with and will require creative marketing to reach the targeted population.

WORKFORCE *plus* works very closely with many community based organizations and non-profits and serves on their advisory boards. **WORKFORCE *plus*** is very involved in furnishing information regarding all services and training opportunities to populations these organizations serve in an effort of helping to recruit their clients for our services. **WORKFORCE *plus*** pledges to continue its outreach mission of serving those most in need.

Identification of special populations (low income, persons with disabilities, and others) is initiated at registration and initial assessment in the region's workforce centers. Partner program staff (Welfare Transition and Veterans Program) are involved in workforce registration and are trained in basic job seeker services, referral to other core services, and referral to WIA. Participants of various programs have access to job search, employability skills, interviewing skills, and other workshops. These combined services

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and partners reinforce a seamless delivery system to special populations. Additionally, **WORKFORCE *plus*** has three (3) designated staff who also assume duties as disability navigators across the region and facilitate the provision of services to persons with disabilities.

- d. How will the RWB streamline the sequence of services to facilitate individual access to needed services and training?

WORKFORCE *plus* has streamlined core services so they are accessible to all universal customers from the point of initial assessment and during most points of service delivery. Those individuals who are identified in special populations (low income, persons with disabilities, offenders, dislocated workers, etc.) are encouraged to access appropriate services and workshops to address employment barriers. As part of the assessment process, individuals who could possibly benefit from training opportunities are referred to WIA for more specialized case management services.

D. Youth Services

- 1. Describe the anticipated program design for the WIA Youth funds provided under the ARRA. Include in the description a program design for both younger, in-school, and older or out-of-school youth (including 22-24 year olds that can be served with ARRA funds).

WORKFORCE *plus* has only one (1) service provider for youth services in the region. This eliminates layers and duplications of services by more than one provider. **WORKFORCE *plus*** secured the services through an RFP process. Services are provided to youth between the ages of 16 and 24 both in-school and out-of-school. **WORKFORCE *plus*** required at least a 50% enrollment of out-of-school youth as a targeted population for ARRA youth services. All services require employability skills and a work experience component as well as pre and post testing to determine work readiness skill attainments. (Please see SYEP Plan Attachment).

- 2. Will the RWB use the Recovery Act funds to fund only a 2009 summer youth program or some combination of 2009 and 2010? If using the funds over two summers, what percentage of funds does the RWB anticipate using for the first summer?

WORKFORCE *plus* will use the Recovery Act funds to fund only a 2009 summer youth program. **WORKFORCE *plus*** anticipates expending 100% of the Recovery Act funds for the current program.

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3. If using the funds for summer employment opportunities, describe how the RWB will deliver summer youth employment opportunities. Will the RWB operate the program or allocate the funds?

WORKFORCE plus contracted with The Kaiser Group, Inc. for operation of the summer program. (Please see SYEP Plan Attachment).

4. Describe the types of worksites that will be developed for summer employment, including a mix of public and private sector work experiences, and how the RWB will ensure that meaningful work experiences will be developed.

Private for-profit as well as public and non-profit sites have been developed. Worksites include occupations in community-based organizations, nurseries, food service, office/administration, etc. The service provider hired a significant number of additional staff, utilizes the services on the Quality Control Auditor and the services of an internal consultant which monitor worksites and participants assigned to those sites. The Board also has staff who review worksite information submitted closely for issues/concerns. The monitors speak with the participants to gauge their interest as well as determining if the participant feels the work experience is meaningful. The monitors also interview worksite supervisors to determine if there are any issues with the participants and to see if job coaching is needed. *WORKFORCE plus* is requesting feedback from the participants as to their experiences in the summer program.

5. Describe the RWB's policy for developing the mix of classroom versus worksite time in a summer employment opportunity. Describe the RWB's policy for determining that summer employment opportunities are connected to academic and/or occupational learning and the types of connections that will be utilized.

WORKFORCE plus applied a focus specifically on summer work experience combined with employability skills training for youth across the region in order to quickly provide an economical boost to the local economy through the payment of wages to youth. The only classroom based training provided was the employability skills training component for a period of up to 32 hours depending on the needs and work readiness of the youth. A percentage of youth who were engaged in the summer work experience will be considered for enrollment in occupational skills training as appropriate.

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6. Describe any policies or strategies that the RWB is implementing to ensure that local areas implement activities that support out-of-school youth during summer and/or non-summer months, such as supportive services, needs-based payments, or day-care.

WORKFORCE plus required a 50% enrollment of out-of-school youth as part of the RFP and subsequent contract process. Transportation assistance was provided to the youth to assist them in getting to and from work until they received their first paycheck. Out-of-school youth who wish to continue to post-secondary education through an Individual Training Account (ITA) will be funded using Adult or Dislocated Worker WIA and/or ARRA funds. As such, these individuals will receive the same supportive services as all other customers receive in accordance with local policies and limitations. Supportive services provided in the region are: transportation assistance, assistance with uniforms or work clothing, etc.

7. Provide the anticipated number of youth to be served with Recovery Act funds, including the anticipated number of summer employment opportunities created with Recovery Act funds.

WORKFORCE plus plans to serve approximately 500 youth in summer employment work experience opportunities.

- E. Veterans' Priority of Service - What policies and strategies does the RWB have in place to ensure that, pursuant to the Jobs for Veterans Act (P.L.107-288) (38 USC 4215), priority of service is provided to veterans (and certain spouses) who otherwise meet the eligibility requirements for all employment and training programs funded by the Department of Labor?

To ensure Veterans' Priority of Services, all veterans are identified upon entering or accessing workforce center services and are provided services at the core level. The needs-based approach is used to identify veterans with specific needs, i.e., disabled veterans, recently separated veterans, etc. The veterans are referred to the Disabled Veteran Outreach Program or the Local Veteran Employment Representative for the appropriate services. *WORKFORCE plus* was also awarded a brAive grant to specifically target services for those veterans returning from Afghanistan and Iraq and *WORKFORE plus* has a dedicated staff person to recruit veterans and provide services. *WORKFORCE plus* applied Priority of Service to the veteran population prior to the issuance of new regulations implementing Priority of Service for veterans and eligible spouses as provided by the Jobs for Veterans Act (JVA), and as specified by the Veterans' Benefits, Health Care, and Information Technology Act of 2006. Priority of service is applied in all workforce centers as part of the eligibility process for

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WIA training and veterans who apply at the same time as economically disadvantaged customers receive priority service for enrollment purposes. The veteran population receives priority of service for all qualified job training programs defined as any workforce preparation, development or delivery program or service that is directly funded, in whole or in part, by the Department of Labor. Since enactment of JVA 2002, priority of services has been implemented under policy guidance issued by the Employment and Training Administration. The purpose of these regulations is to further articulate how priority of service is to be applied across all new and existing qualified job training programs. The new regulations appear in the December 19, 2008 edition of the Federal Register and were effective as of January 19, 2009.

The priority of services to veterans include: job search placement and assistance, career planning and guidance, case management, assessment and testing services, interviewing skills workshops, referral to educational and vocational training. The workforce center staff are trained to inform veterans of their rights to "priority of service" in all workforce activities.

- F. Service Delivery to Targeted Populations - Describe the RWB's strategies to ensure that the full range of employment and training programs and services delivered through the One-Stop delivery system are accessible to and will meet the needs of dislocated workers, displaced homemakers, low-income individuals, migrant and seasonal farm workers, women, minorities, individuals training for nontraditional employment, veterans, public assistance recipients and individuals with multiple barriers to employment (including older individuals, limited English proficiency individuals, and people with disabilities). (§112(b)(17)(A)(iv).)

1. Describe the strategy it will use to effectively implement the Recovery Act priority of service for low- income individuals and recipients of public assistance under the WIA Adult program.

WORKFORCE plus applies priority of service to low-income and recipients of public assistance under the Adult Program for all customers. The region does not use any percentage above poverty level to serve individuals in training due to the desire to serve those most in need which are the individuals within poverty level in accordance with annual guidelines issued from the Agency for Workforce Innovation.

WORKFORCE plus works in partnership with area educational institutions and partner organizations to ensure that information is provided so that they may provide assistance in recruitment. The region utilizes a reverse approach to recruitment as well by regularly sending career specialists to various educational institutions to recruit individuals who are in need of

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assistance with training expenses. **WORKFORCE *plus*** will continue to build upon its established partnerships and reach out to new organizations in order to ensure that the community is aware of increased training opportunities.

WORKFORCE *plus* monitors the expenditure of funds and the target populations that funds are utilized to serve. If there becomes a need to make adjustments in order to remain within budget, those changes will be made.

2. Indicate how the RWB will use Wagner-Peyser resources to support individuals with disabilities, such as funding disability program navigators in One-Stop Career Centers or assisting other targeted populations.

WORKFORCE *plus* received a cut to funding for Disability Navigator services. The services are now provided by three (3) current staff members as part of their job duties. These staff members will work closely with local community based organizations where relationships were already established by the previous navigator in order to share information and provide information as to available services. **WORKFORCE *plus***' workforce centers are ADA compliant and offer adaptive equipment to assist the disabled population in accessing services.

WORKFORCE *plus* also serves ex-offenders and has an established linkage with the Leon County jail where inmates are provided information about available services prior to their release including the Federal Bonding Program. **WORKFORCE *plus*** provides weekly Federal Bonding workshops. **WORKFORCE *plus*** provides career counseling such as providing information regarding occupations requiring backgrounds and how their criminal record can impact their ability to gain employment.

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WORKFORCE SERVICES PLAN 2009-2010**III. Operations**

- A. Transparency and Public Comment - The RWB should provide a description of the process it used to make the Plan available to the public and the outcome of its review of the resulting public comments. (§§111(g) and 112(b)(9).)**

1. Local efforts to promote transparency.

WIA participants enrolled prior to the Recovery Act are served utilizing WIA formula funds. New participants enrolled will use Recovery Act funds to provide Intensive Services as well as for training programs that do not exceed 12 months in length. The region intends to focus on short-term training programs that help the individuals return to employment in a quick manner. Participants enrolled in Training Services may be dual enrolled in WIA formula funded programs so that their status can be changed based upon expenditures and funding allocation. In some cases, participants may also be dual enrolled in special projects dependent upon target populations and grant requirements. For those individuals enrolled in On-the-Job Training and Employed Worker Training, these individuals will be served using Recovery Act funds. The decision to use multiple funding streams is a paper transaction and the participants have no knowledge of separate funding streams. All participants served in the region receive equitable services regardless of funding stream.

2. The process used to make the Plan modification available to the public and the outcome of its review of the public comments received. The RWB should describe the updated process used to ensure public comment on and input into the development of the local Workforce Services Plan. Include as an attachment, all comments including those that express disagreement with the plan. Include a description of specific steps taken to include input from members of the local board and members of businesses and labor organizations. Comments received after submission of the local Workforce Services Plan modification that express disagreement with the plan should also be forwarded to WFI at the address previously indicated.

The Plan was posted to **WORKFORCE *plus*** website on September 4, 2009 and will be available at each of **WORKFORCE *plus*** offices for a period of twenty-one consecutive days. Also, email notifications regarding the availability of the Plan was sent to Board members, partner agencies, community based organizations and other interested parties.

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All comments were required in writing to be submitted to the Chief Executive Officer by email or mail.

The end date for public comment will be Friday, September 25, 2009. Any/all comments received will be reviewed by **WORKFORCE *plus*** Board of Directors. The Board members will determine what revisions will be made based upon public comments received. All revisions will be incorporated and re-submitted for approval by all entities. The Board shall have the authority to determine whether or not public comments is of a nature that substantial changes are required to the plan and local operations. All public comment received will be provided to the necessary agency representatives.

B. Increasing Services for Universal Access

Upon receipt of ARRA funds, the region began the process of hiring staff in order to provide services to the increased numbers of customers. The number of individuals assigned to work PREP has increased and the region continues to evaluate the number of staff needed to provide quality services. **WORKFORCE *plus*** will take appropriate action as needed to ensure there is sufficient levels of staff available in all workforce centers to provide universal access and services required to meet the needs of our customers.

The Business Services Team has continued to focus on community initiatives that increase awareness of services offered by the region. **WORKFORCE *plus*** participated in numerous speaking engagements with area agencies and partners to market the services that are available to customers and employers. **WORKFORCE *plus*** has diligently worked to ensure that area employers are aware of job creation and retention opportunities that are available.

WORKFORCE *plus* ensures that all new staff are provided appropriate programmatic training, management information system training, etc. to facilitate the delivery of comprehensive Wagner-Peyser re-employment services to area customers.

C. Procurement

1. How providers of all youth services will be procured under the Recovery Act. If using funds for summer employment opportunities and the fiscal agent is not operating this program element, please specifically describe procedures for procuring summer employment operational entities and job opportunities. (Note: If this question was answered in the local Summer Youth Plan, please attach a copy).

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Procurement of Summer Employment Youth Program activities were addressed in the Summer Youth Employment Program Plan. A copy of the Plan is attached that includes information regarding the procurement process.

2. How the RWB will implement the Recovery Act provision that it a may award a contract to an institution of higher education or other eligible training provider if the local board determines that it would facilitate the training of multiple individuals in high-demand occupations, and if such a contract does not limit customer choice.

WORKFORCE *plus* will purchase training from several educational partners based on class sizes ranging from 10-20 individuals per class. These are short-term training programs defined as less than three (3) months in the following training areas: Basic Life Support, Medical Front Office/Medical Office Specialist, Cabling, Heavy Equipment Operator/Dump Truck Operator, Certified Nursing Assistant, and OSHA.

WORKFORCE *plus* will ensure that the cost of training is reasonable in comparison to other providers of the same training as well as ensuring that these are areas of training where individuals can exit and obtain employment in the current economy. **WORKFORCE *plus*** will review available jobs in these training occupations as well as reach out to area employers for on-the-job training opportunities for these individuals.

D. Technical Assistance

All new staff hired through ARRA and summer youth employed by the contracted service provider have undergone training in ARRA reporting requirements and EFM data entry requirements. Staff have also received trained on data entry requirements for Employ Florida Marketplace. New staff learn skills needed by working closely with experienced staff as part of ongoing training. **WORKFORCE *plus*** also provides training and technical assistance as needed. Staffing under the Summer Youth Employment Program was outlined in the Summer Youth Employment Program Plan (see attachment).

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E. Monitoring and Oversight

The Performance Unit's monitoring visits to service providers include a full compliance review of programmatic and fiscal procedures, performance/outcomes, cost effectiveness, and value of the program to the community. Eligibility, assessment, performance and other case management documentation is reviewed during the monitoring visit. Each program year, **WORKFORCE *plus*** issues a Monitoring Schedule to the service provider of upcoming dates for the reviews throughout the year. In addition, **WORKFORCE *plus*** has established monitoring procedures which are outlined in the monitoring directive.

WORKFORCE will conduct monitoring of the reemployment services program utilizing the Wagner-Peyser AWI Monitoring Tool and any additional tool that is created by AWI. In this manner, the local review team is using the same tool as State staff is using and ensures that the local staff is maintaining focus on the same federal and state requirements.

Monitoring of the ARRA Summer Youth Employment Program is outlined in the region's Plan which is attached to this document. All SYEP staff were trained in Child Labor Laws. All worksites were provided Child Labor Law information and posters posted at all worksites where minor youth were engaged in work experience.

F. Accountability and Performance

1. The Recovery Act emphasizes the importance of accountability. The RWB should describe its overall efforts to account for the results of activities funded by the Recovery Act, and how it will measure whether it has achieved its local implementation goals.

WORKFORCE *plus* has received all Training and Employment Guidance Letters issued by the United States Department of labor and the reporting requirements for the Recovery Act funds. Staff has been trained on Recovery Act requirements and will continue to receive training as new information is received. **WORKFORCE *plus*** developed a biweekly reporting tool where the actual numbers and types of services are reported by the service provider. All reporting requirements and tracking requirements have been provided to staff.

WORKFORCE *plus* will continue to focus on the same performance measures for the ARRA Adult and Dislocated Worker program as are used for the formula funded programs. These measures include employment upon training completion or through services received in assisted core and

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intensive services; wage at placement and long-term employment retention and wages. Other measures that may be required later by USDOL, Workforce Florida, Inc. and the Agency for Workforce Innovation will also be tracked and reported.

2. The Recovery Act requires RWBs to report on work readiness to assess the effectiveness of summer employment opportunities for youth. The RWB should identify its methodology for determining whether a measurable increase in work readiness skills has occurred, and what tools will be used for this determination. **(Note: If this question has been answered in the Summer Youth Plan, please refer that plan where appropriate).**

WORKFORCE *plus* outlined the work readiness measurement methodology in the Summer Employment Youth Program Plan. **WORKFORCE *plus*** developed a General Workplace Competencies Checklist for tracking pre and post test work readiness skill levels. A pre and post test is given to youth to document attainment of work readiness.

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IV. Signature Page

This plan represents the **Big Bend Jobs & Education Council, Inc. d/b/a WORKFORCE *plus*** efforts to maximize resources available under Title I of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998, the Wagner-Peyser Act and the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act of 2009 and to coordinate these resources with other State and local programs in the following geographical workforce investment service area: **Gadsden, Leon and Wakulla** counties, Florida.

This plan is submitted for the period of July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010 in accordance with the provisions of the Workforce Investment Act, the Wagner-Peyser Act, and the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act of 2009. We further certify that we will operate our Workforce Investment Act, Wagner-Peyser Act and the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act of 2009 programs in accordance with this plan and applicable federal and state laws and regulations.

Workforce Development Board Chair

Chief Elected Official

Signature

Signature

Timothy J. Meenan
Name (printed or typed)

Name (printed or typed)

Chairman

Title

Date

Date