

South Central Oklahoma Workforce Investment Board  
WIA Comprehensive One-Year Local Plan  
July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010

**SECTION I – Request for extension of Local Plan from 07/01/09 through 06/30/10**

The South Central Oklahoma Workforce Investment Board (SCOWIB) in partnership with the Local Elected Officials (LEOs) respectfully submits this request to extend the WIA Comprehensive Plan for one year through June 30, 2010. This extension constitutes the fifth year of the five-year planning cycle. Modifications to the plan include initiatives funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

**SECTION II – Request for extension of Board Certification from 10/01/09 through 06/30/10**

SCOWIB in partnership with the LEOs requests that our current Workforce Investment Board Certification be extended through June 30, 2010.

**SECTION III – Context, Vision, and Strategy – Economic and Labor Market Context**

**Question 1. Provide a detailed analysis of the local economy, the labor pool, and the labor market context.**

The South Central Oklahoma Workforce investment Area has seen a large increase in both the number of unemployed and the unemployment rate. At the peak of the economic cycle (Dec 2007) the WIA unemployment rate was 4.2% while the most recent report (July 2009) shows a rate of 6.5%. The number of unemployed has gone up from 5,370 to 8,520 over the same time frame.

A table describing some of the major demographics of our area's insured unemployed is provided below. As the table indicates, the current recession has disproportionately impacted lesser educated men who worked in the mining and manufacturing industries.

High School diploma or less: 60.6%  
Male: 69.2%  
Mining: 15.4%  
Manufacturing: 23.7%

The Bureau of Labor Statistics Quarterly Census of Employment & Wage program is one of the only data sources for establishment of payroll employment at the county or WIA level. However, the most recent time frame available is the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2008. While the national recession had been in duration for a year by the end of that quarter Oklahoma did not see its

most significant employment declines until the first half of 2009. None of our workforce areas experienced much change in covered employment in the twelve months ended December 2008 with the exception of two where a non-economic coding change related to college student employment impacted the results in a marginally negative way.

Skills and competencies in the following areas have been identified as some of the major challenges facing our area: soft and workplace skills; basic educational skills; technical skills and competencies; computer literacy skills; English as a second language competency; Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) competencies; and, advanced manufacturing technology competencies and skills. There is an increased need for engineers and high-level technicians with an understanding of advanced STEM to operate and maintain the sophisticated equipment used in today's oil and gas exploration and extraction operations. These skills are also needed in the manufacturing and healthcare industries. All of these industries are expected to be important in the economic recovery of South Central Oklahoma.

**Question 2. The Governor's vision for ensuring a continuum of education and training opportunities that support a skilled workforce to utilize ARRA to achieve greater numbers of appropriately skilled and credentialed Oklahomans in order to make Oklahoma more competitive in a global economy. How does the LWIB plan to support the governor's vision?**

The receipt of ARRA funds by the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission and the South Central Oklahoma Workforce Investment Area had a two-fold impact on SCOWIB's ability to serve a greater number of customers in the area's workforce centers. First, the added funding provided by ARRA resulted in increased Employment Service and Workforce Investment Act staff to deliver integrated services in the area's workforce centers. Demands on the centers significantly increased towards the latter part of the past program year due to several large layoffs in the area and the tightening economy in south central Oklahoma. With the increased staffing levels, workforce centers were able to continue providing essential services and expand services necessary to assess current skill levels, explore labor market information and careers, identify industries and occupations projected for growth in the area, compare their current skill levels and credentials to those in demand and projected to be in demand, and prepare for and take the opportunity to obtain an Oklahoma Career Readiness Certificate. Second, the increased funding levels for Adults and Dislocated Workers enabled SCOWIB to increase the funding level for customer training, as well as align Individual Training Accounts (ITA) with the current costs associated with education and training. SCOWIB significantly increased the ITA funding levels which allow customers to undertake longer term training programs that result in skills and credentials acquisition needed to meet the mid-range requirements of business and industry in this area. This area has coordinated Trade Adjustment Act (TAA) funding for several years. With changes in the TAA regulations this year, TAA certification was delayed for a large number of adversely impacted employees. With ARRA funding, SCOWIB was able to start 51 dislocated workers in training in June and August who would have otherwise missed the start of training programs.

**Question 3. How does the LWIB plan to support the Governor’s vision for ensuring 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, such as out-of-school youth, homeless youth, youth in foster care, youth aging out of foster care, youth offenders, children of incarcerated parents, migrant and seasonal farm worker youth, youth with disabilities, and other youth at risk?**

ARRA funding has provided an added layer of opportunity for area youth. These funds have made it possible for the area to serve a greater number of youth than in past years. By complementing formula WIA funds with ARRA funds, more WIA/ARRA services will be provided to eligible area youth.

SCOWIB’s WIA/ARRA Youth Services Contract makes all ten youth service elements authorized by WIA available to eligible youth. However, educational achievement services, occupational skills training, work readiness, and work experience are SCOWIB’s priorities. SCOWIB, the SCOWIB Youth Council, and the Youth Service Provider are mindful that the service mix for youth is based on assessment and the Individual Service Strategy (ISS). Delivery of appropriate services, not just any service, is the area goal.

SCOWIB Directors and staff participate in area youth initiatives, committees, and task forces as opportunities arise and service providers do the same. SCOWIB’s Youth Council reviews the activities of the service provider and collaborates with partner agencies who have served the most hard-to-serve youth. These partnerships include organizations and agencies serving economically disadvantaged youth, foster youth, youthful offenders, homeless youth, and youth with disabilities and serve as an effective outreach mechanism for the area.

SCOWIB’s Youth Council has developed goals that are aligned with the Governor’s Council for Workforce and Economic Development vision and SCOWIB’s goals for serving youth in south central Oklahoma. The Youth Council is and will be the convener of area youth groups to work to eliminate duplication in services.

SCOWIB’s staff has formed partnerships with agencies that target a wide range of at-risk youth. SCOWIB staff and the youth contractor have developed professional relationships with other partners in the South Central Oklahoma Workforce Investment System, employers, law enforcement agencies, the juvenile justice system, secondary school districts, and other area youth support systems.

The South Central Oklahoma area has re-focused recruitment efforts on older, out-of-school youth as this is the group of youth more likely to be affected by the current economy. We have adjusted our supportive services budget to take into account the increased financial responsibilities of this population. And, we have set aside more funding for work experience and occupational skills training to provide opportunities for the older, out-of-school youth population to help them segue into jobs with a sustainable living wage.

**Question 4. Describe innovative service delivery strategies the LWIB has or is planning to undertake to maximize resources, increase service levels, improve service quality, achieve better integration or meet other key state goals.**

In the current economy and the re-tooling of America in a “greener” direction, SCOWIB believes that it is important to not just provide more services; but, it is more important to provide the right services to customers. Workforce Oklahoma Center staff in South Central Oklahoma incorporate a tiered assessment and planning process to determine: a customer’s current skills and skill levels; how well a customer’s skills and experience fit business and industry requirements; the additional skills or credentials a customer needs to be effective in the workplace; and, the initial information to be included on the Basic Employment Plan (BEP) or Enhanced Employment Plan (EEP).

The BEP or EEP jointly developed by the customer and a Workforce Oklahoma staff member, identifies the additional skills and credentials needed by the customer to achieve a career or occupational goal. The employment plan also serves as the map that identifies the workforce system services the customer needs to achieve his/her career or occupational goals. These services include the full range of Wagner-Peyser and WIA authorized and delivered in the area’s integrated Workforce Oklahoma Centers, as well as other services available through system partners.

SCOWIB’s demand occupation list is developed using occupational projections, information provided by SCOWIB directors, and information obtained through the Manufacturing Skills Partnership developed by the Southwest Oklahoma Impact Coalition. The occupations contained on this list support SCOWIB’s strategic goals and the vision of the Governor’s Council for Workforce and Economic Development, which positions this part of the state to be globally competitive in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Targeted Work Experiences and On-the-Job Training Programs have been and will be used to assist job seeking and business customers. Work Experiences are most frequently used when a job seeking customer has demonstrated skill levels and/or credentials, but is not able to find appropriate employment. Targeted work experiences have been successful in demonstrating to the business that the job seeking customer is a good fit or provides the job seeking customer with the business specific experience needed to be a good fit for the business. Targeted Work Experiences and On-the-Job Training opportunities are coordinated with Job Development services and short-term/“fast track” training programs developed by area technology centers. These “fast track” programs provide customers with entry-level skills and knowledge and the work experience or on-the-job program addresses experience concerns. The priority for targeted work experiences and on-the-job training services are with the manufacturing, healthcare, utilities, and simulations industries. Although not used much in the past, the additional funding provided by ARRA, especially the youth funding stream, will provide opportunities to develop and incorporate registered apprenticeships in our service mix. Quality training programs offered by the area technology centers with work experiences will result in customers obtaining the skills recognized and required by trade organizations. The classroom

training provides the basic skills while the work component provides for reinforced learning and first-hand experience, which provides for advancement in the trade.

Because of the emphasis on the linkage of workforce development, economic development, and education, SCOWIB ensures that representatives from all these areas are members of the board and contribute and collaborate on key workforce and economic development issues in south central Oklahoma. SCOWIB has taken its role seriously and seeks information and direction from workforce, education, and economic development leaders in the area. SCOWIB is a participating member of the Southwest Oklahoma Impact Coalition (SOIC) formed by the education and regional economic development planning districts in a 20 county region in Southwest Oklahoma. Regional economic development is the cornerstone of SOIC. Since its creation, economic development entities from throughout the region and the state have become active members and participants in SOIC initiatives.

## **Section IV – Service Delivery**

### **State Governance and Collaboration**

**Question 1. Describe how the agencies involved in the workforce investment system interrelate on workforce, economic development, and education issues and the respective lines of authority.**

Beyond the boundaries of the Workforce Investment Area, SCOWIB is an active partner of the Southwest Oklahoma Impact Coalition that now meets on a bi-monthly basis to address economic development and quality of life issues impacting 20 counties in the Southwest part of Oklahoma. Members of the Coalition include the institutions of higher education, local economic development activities, and five of the region's seven technology centers. At the Workforce Investment Area level, SCOWIB's membership includes representatives from all the workforce investment system partners, who exchange information on the programs and services each partner provides. SCOWIB staff has attended regional and state-level meetings and briefings on workforce-related ARRA and other sources of ARRA funding received by agencies and organizations in the state. SCOWIB staff participated in the presentation of three area-wide briefings for businesses, the general public, local representatives of state agencies, other local agencies, and local governments on the ARRA funds received by the state and local area and the intended use of those funds. SCOWIB staff has also presented information on workforce ARRA funds to local governments at meetings and through printed materials. Staff conducted one-on-one meetings with post secondary education and training institutions on the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth funds that SCOWIB received and their intended uses.

SCOWIB staff also provided written information to the high schools in the area on ARRA and WIA youth funds and programs as a lead in to the summer component for ARRA and WIA year-round program. SCOWIB coordinated with Community Action Agencies, Housing Authorities serving homeless youth, Department of Human Services focusing on foster youth,

Adult Education and Literacy organizations, transportation organizations, Job Corps Centers, and Technology Centers during the planning and execution phase of the Summer Program in the area. Leveraging resources was a topic of particular interest. Timing of funds receipts and program start dates precluded most of the collaborative service strategies; however, realizing the compressed planning-to-execution timeframe, a serious attempt was at least made.

At the local level, system partners and workforce center partners collaborate on workforce issues and customer service delivery on a daily basis. The area's Memorandum of Understanding promotes and encourages referral and collaboration of customers and the area partners do a good job of providing coordinated services. Each organization and activity has organizational policies, procedures, regulations, and laws that they must follow, but the ultimate goal of the workforce system is to provide quality service to customers and we believe they take that goal seriously and provide quality service. In the area's three lead cities, at least one member of the Workforce Oklahoma Center team is an active member of the chamber of commerce.

The established lines of authority remain along with adherence to agency or organization policies, procedures, regulations, and laws; however, what has changed and strengthened over the years is the focus on common goals for the area that focus on workforce and economic development in the area and the state.

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

Beginning January 2010, SCOWIB will host an annual meeting of workforce investment system partners in the area. The agenda will be developed by the system partners serving on SCOWIB. Steps that need to be taken to improve operational collaboration will be an agenda item. All workforce investment system partners will be invited to the annual meeting. Additionally, SCOWIB will host a workforce investment system partners meeting in each of the area's three labor market areas. It is envisioned that the workforce center in that labor market area will co-host the conference. The purpose of these meetings will be to strengthen relationships, gain an understanding of current organization/agency priorities, and to develop strategies and practices to strengthen collaboration between the members of the workforce system in South Central Oklahoma.

Duplication of service will be addressed at the four conferences previously mentioned; however, the area's Memorandum of Understanding, coordination between agency counterparts serving common customers, coordination of training funds procedures, and, the integrated services model between all OESC and WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker staff have virtually eliminated the possibility of duplication of services in the area. To further protect the system from duplicating services, Oklahoma Service Link requires the customer to indicate other forms or types of assistance/public assistance received and center staff ask the customer

during the EEP or Individual Employment Plan if they receive assistance/public assistance. If the answer is yes, it is appropriately recorded and coordinated during the service delivery process.

### **Adult and Dislocated Worker Services**

#### **Question 3. Describe LWIB's strategies and policies to ensure adults and dislocated workers have universal access to the minimum required core services as described in §134(d)(2).**

SCOWIB designated three comprehensive Workforce Oklahoma Centers in South Central Oklahoma and each is organized and equipped to provide more than the minimum core services required by the law. All required core services are available to customers. The SCOWIB-approved integrated services system provides these services to customers. SCOWIB has contracted with an adult and dislocated worker service provider, Association of South Central Oklahoma Governments (ASCOG), whose staffing model was developed and based on experience with WIA and in collaboration with OESC.

It is SCOWIB's goal to develop and maintain a quality, seamless system of service delivery. The goal will be accomplished by ensuring that front-line center staff - those actually providing services to area customers - have the training that they need to provide the best service. The relationship between the two main center partners, OESC and WIA, is such that they work together to identify ways to improve service to joint customers.

SCOWIB expects its staff to stay abreast of service delivery policy requirements and to inform them and recommend changes that should or must be made in order to ensure universal, quality access to core services.

#### **Question 4. Describe how the LWIB 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.**

SCOWIB maintains a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the board and the Workforce Oklahoma Center partners in the area's workforce investment system which clearly defines the board's relationship with these partners and how resources will be integrated. The MOU serves to align services and leverage resources, including the ARRA resources received by the various partners, within the system. The MOU contains provisions describing the services to be provided through the system, how the costs of such services and the operating costs of the system will be funded, and the methods of referral of customers between system partners.

Additionally, the integrated services strategy approved by SCOWIB was developed by the workforce center partners, is adhered to by both organizations, and fully integrates the resources of both organizations.

**Question 5. How will the LWIB support the Governor’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.**

SCOWIB has directed its board staff and service provider to focus more on training customers this year. Center staff whose primary function is in the skills development unit will receive necessary training and be equipped with a thorough understanding of SCOWIB’s intent to ensure customer access to training is as efficient and effective as possible with a reduction of the red-tape when possible. SCOWIB has reviewed and revised its Individual Training Account policy to provide a more realistic level of funding for training programs. Staff will assist customers in searching for, applying for, and coordinating all appropriate funds and resources to maximize their training access. Additionally, the allocation of ARRA funds to SCOWIB’s budget significantly increased the amount of funding available for training customers.

To increase training opportunities for individuals, SCOWIB will take full advantage of the opportunity to award direct contracts to institutions of higher education and eligible training providers if it will benefit the customers and/or employers that are being served with Recovery Act funds. ASCOG will assess existing training opportunities to ensure that training provided through these direct contracts does not duplicate existing training courses.

Both SCOWIB and ASCOG have a good partnering relationship with the institutions of higher education and other eligible training providers and will make every effort to design and provide training that will result in real outcomes for its customers.

**Question 6. What models/templates/approaches does the LWIB plan for service delivery in the One-Stop Career Centers? For example, do all One-Stop Career Centers have a uniform method of organizing their service delivery to business customers? Is there a common individual assessment process utilized in every One-Stop Career Center? Are all One-Stop Career Centers required to have a resource center that is open to everyone?**

ASCOG, OESC, and SCOWIB staff designed and implemented the “integrated services model” for Adult, Dislocated Worker and business services that is used in the area’s three workforce centers. The model provides for three functional areas of service within each Workforce Oklahoma Center in the South Central Oklahoma Workforce Investment Area. Each functional area has been designed in a way to facilitate maximum customer flow. This customer flow will streamline the sequence of services to provide for delivery of an individual’s needed core, intensive, and training services.

There is a common individualized assessment process utilized in every Center in this area. The process consists of a battery of assessments to reveal a customer's occupational interests, values, abilities, and basic reading, math, and locating information skill levels.

The implementation of this integrated services model has enhanced the services delivered to the workforce in South Central Oklahoma. SCOWIB has also adopted a policy to provide intensive services to all customers accessing the area's centers. A Priority of Services policy has been adopted and is strictly followed to ensure that funds are targeted to those most in need of services.

**Question 7. What policies and strategies does the LWIB 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?**

In March of 2009, SCOWIB revised its Priority of Service policy to include veterans (and some spouses) as well as service to low-income adults and public assistance recipients with WIA Title I Adult funds. In regard to veterans, provision of services would be established as follows:

- Available funds would not change.
- First to be served would be public assistance recipients and low-income individuals who are also veterans.
- The second group to be served would be public assistance recipients and low-income non-veterans.
- Among participants who are not public assistance recipients or low-income individuals, or who are dislocated workers, veterans will receive priority over non-veterans.

SCOWIB policies are shared with those individuals who actually provide the services and monitoring is done to ensure that policies are being followed.

## **Section V – Waivers**

**Question 1. Describe your current waivers and the waivers you have requested an extension for. Please describe any future waivers you might request.**

The South Central area currently operates under the following waivers. Specific to this area is a waiver for the inclusion of Youth Follow-Up Services as a Youth Program Framework Service in order to create a clear line of Youth Case Management and to avoid confusion and services of Board and State monitoring units and WIA Title I Service Providers. Results of the waiver will allow for greater continuity of service and monitoring of progress of the youth as they move through the various services identified within their individual service strategy and

will create a more streamlined and cohesive approach to case management. This waiver began July 1, 2008 and is continuing through subsequent years.

Statewide waivers being utilized in the South Central area include the waiver that exempts reporting of the 17 core measures which will allow better system alignment as the transition to common measures continues. Also, the waiver for use of the eligible training provider system for older and out-of-school youth has benefited this area. Local workforce investment boards would have the option to use the Eligible Training Provider system to secure training providers for these two youth populations resulting in streamlined services and increased local flexibility.

#### **Section VI – Required Certifications and Documents (Not Included with Draft)**

**Attachment A: Signature of Local Board Chair**

**Attachment B: Signature of Chief Local Elected Official**

**Attachment C: Local Elected Officials' Consortium Agreement**

**Attachment D: One-Stop Operator Agreements**

**Attachment E: Signed Memorandum of Understanding Extension Page**