



Department of
Job and Family Services

Ted Strickland, Governor
Douglas Lumpkin, Director

To: Ohio Workforce Coalition
From: Sherry Keys-Hebron
Date: January 13, 2009
Re: Reaction to Ohio Workforce Coalition's Policy Platform

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Ohio Workforce Coalition's draft policy platform. We at the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services are eager to work with the Ohio Workforce Coalition towards workforce solutions.

Recommendation #1

Improve state and local response to mass layoffs to better meet the needs of dislocated workers and put them back to work as quickly as possible in high-demand occupations paying family sustaining wages.

ODJFS Response:

- This recommendation is very much in line with the changes that ODJFS is proposing for Rapid Response, based on the findings of the National Employment Law Project (NELP) Report. However, it may be helpful to adjust the wording here to reflect a commitment to serve *all* layoffs, not just mass layoffs.
- We agree with the points made in strategies 1 and 2, and will be working towards accomplishing them with the Rapid Response state/local stakeholders reform group.
- Strategy 3 calls for investment in a new state data system. We agree with the need to increase communications between the state and locals, and certainly support the goal of increasingly improved data that will provide us with constructive information on service quality, delivery, and outcomes. In fact, we are indeed working towards ways to track outcomes for all dislocated workers who become customers of WIA Rapid Response services. However, constrained resources require a realistic approach; a new data system may not be possible at this time. Therefore, it will be important to develop short term goals for system enhancements alongside long term goals.

Recommendation #2:

Make postsecondary education and training more affordable for adult workers.

ODJFS Response:

- ODJFS defers to the Board of Regents in regards to strategies 1 and 2.

30 East Broad Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215
jfs.ohio.gov

An Equal Opportunity Employer and Service Provider

- Strategy 3a recommends establishing uniform, statewide definitions for WIA training services and intensive services. ODJFS agrees that this would be valuable, and will plan to work on definitions and training in this regard.
- Strategy 3b recommends collecting local and area data. ODJFS currently has the ability to track the services delivered by service type and description, as well as performance outcomes (WIA performance measures and successful/non-successful completion). Tracking data beyond this would most likely require a database change, though, which is probably not feasible in the current budget climate. Additionally, employers have raised concerns about the burdens that previous ODJFS attempts at data collection have imposed upon them.
- Strategy 3c recommends establishing a statewide baseline for WIA spending. While well-intentioned, this seems to defy the Workforce Investment Act's emphasis on local control. Further, setting a quota for spending would not necessarily result in the most appropriate investment of resources, nor would it result in better service to customers. Ohio is such a diverse state that if the state established that X percent had to be spent on intensive services, and if, for instance, it was an area of the state where the workforce was uneducated or unskilled, that area would not be able to meet the needs of either their job seekers or employers. Additionally, some training or intensive services may not cost as much as others, making it difficult for the local area to meet their goal; they may go find more expensive providers just to spend money.

Recommendation #3:

Ensure that Choose Ohio First addresses the current need of Ohio employers for middle-skill workers, while building the high-tech workforce of tomorrow.

ODJFS Response:

- ODJFS defers to the Board of Regents' response.

Recommendation #4:

Invest sufficient federal and state resources in the education and training of Ohio's workers and ensure that programs meet the needs of employers.

ODJFS Response:

- ODJFS agrees with this recommendation, strategies, and action items.
- Strategy 2 (a-i) recommends advocating for increased federal investment – we agree, and we are doing that. We would enthusiastically welcome the partnership of the Ohio Workforce Coalition in advocating for additional federal funds. Such a partnership would strengthen our advocacy.
- Strategy 3 (a-c) recommends continuing to streamline employer access to training programs. ODJFS defers to the Dept. of Development on this.