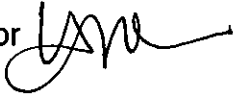




October 8, 2009

Workforce Investment Act Policy Letter No. 08-18

To: WIA Local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), Fiscal Agents,
Administrative Entities and One-Stop Operators

From: Lisa Patt-McDaniel, Director 

Subject: The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 – Project
HIRE (Hometown Investments in Regional Economies) and Ohio Learning
Accounts (OLA)

I. Purpose

To provide state policy and operational parameters for the implementation of Project HIRE and OLA through the local One-Stop service delivery system. Project Hire and OLA is funded by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) statewide funds as authorized by ARRA of 2009.

II. Effective Date

Immediately

III. Background

The Recovery Act is intended to preserve and create jobs, promote the nation's economic recovery and to assist those most impacted by the recession. As one of Ohio's initiatives for stimulus funds, the Ohio Department of Development (ODOD) and the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) are implementing OLA for dislocated workers as a part of Project HIRE. The goal of Project HIRE is to connect Ohio employers who have current job openings with potential Ohio dislocated workers who may have, or who are close to having, the necessary skill sets to fill those positions. OLA is the training services incentive that comes with the individual upon selection.

OLAs are flexible training accounts of up to \$6,000 for eligible dislocated workers who require training or certification as a condition of accepting a bona-fide job offer. All OLA classroom or on-the-job training (OJT) must be completed by December 31, 2010.

As an additional element of Project Hire, local areas may apply for funds to provide Project HIRE outreach and events between September 2009 and June 2010. These events will inform employers about the array of services the state's workforce development system has to offer. Through Project HIRE activities,

employers and dislocated workers will be linked based on the skills of the dislocated workers and the available job openings of the prospective employer.

IV. Requirements

OLA provides an additional package of training services for Ohio's dislocated workers who meet, or who are close to meeting, an employer's requirements for open positions. WIA dislocated workers, Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) and Re-employment Services (REA) individuals are eligible to participate in Project HIRE. Dual enrollment and funding of OLA, TAA, National Emergency Grants (where training is applicable), and WIA formula funded dislocated worker programs is allowable. Through partnership with the local One-Stop and the ODOD Business Services Representative (BSR), these eligible individuals are matched to open positions in targeted industries or demand occupations. Individuals selected for employment and who need additional training or certification may receive an OLA.

The local One-Stop, working with the employer, the eligible individual and other partners will develop an OLA Participant Training Plan (PTP) that may include any combination of classroom and OJT up to \$6,000 per eligible customer. The local One-Stop will enroll the individual in an OLA and request funding from the ODJFS, Office of Workforce Development (OWD). This \$6,000 cap applies only to the OLA, not formula funded WIA ITAs or TAA training contracts.

Local One-Stops will ensure that eligible individuals are informed of availability of OLAs as well as of the full array of services offered through the local One-Stop partners, including WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. Through the provision of this information, individuals may be in a more competitive position to secure employment in targeted industries or demand occupations.

Local WIBs may review existing local WIB policies to determine if additional policies are needed for successful implementation of OLA in their areas. To the extent possible, Ohio maintains the importance of local decision-making, while preserving the intent of the Project HIRE and OLA initiative.

OLAs are to be available and implemented in a manner that is expedient and responsive to the needs of impacted individuals and employers who are hiring. All OLA applicants must be determined eligible, approved for enrollment and complete training by December 31, 2010. Therefore, local areas are strongly encouraged to develop processes that do not unnecessarily impede access to training services.

A. Eligibility

1. Ohio dislocated workers, including TAA eligible participants and REA individuals are eligible to participate in Project HIRE and OLA.

2. Individuals are enrolled in OLAs once there is a commitment to employment and the individual requires additional short-term OLA training as a condition of the employment.

Project HIRE employment matches in targeted industries or demand occupations for eligible individuals may be initiated in four different ways:

- A. An eligible individual identified as a 'Project Hire' participant, successfully meets a potential employer's requirements and is selected to be hired; the dislocated worker may be a candidate for an OLA if training is required condition of employment.
 - B. An employer who contacts the local One-Stop for assistance with getting referrals of seekers for employment and an appropriate candidate is found; the referred dislocated worker may be a candidate for an OLA if training is a required condition of employment.
 - C. If an employer contacts the local One-Stop and states he/she has found a potential seeker on OhioMeansJobs Project Hire Resume database; the dislocated worker may be a candidate for an OLA if training is required condition of employment.
 - D. If the local One-Stop conducts a hiring fair, or a Business Services Representative (BSR) or other One-Stop staff member meets with a hiring employer and introduces a qualified job seeker to the hiring employer, the dislocated worker may be a candidate for an OLA if training is required condition of employment.
3. Local areas will determine if the individual meets the OLA eligibility criteria listed above. Documentation of eligibility must include evidence of current enrollment in WIA, Trade, REA or NEG.
 4. OLA will be issued on a first-come, first-serve basis. Local areas are reminded that veterans' priority of service is mandatory for all levels of services through federal employment and training programs, regardless of the other criteria in local priority policies.
 5. Once the local area has identified an individual as eligible for an OLA and has obtained sufficient documentation, all appropriate data must be entered in SCOTI under special grant office PH-OLA Statewide.

Note: It is encouraged that TAA individuals interested in participating in Project HIRE activities commence Project HIRE participation after their TAA activities to successfully have the ability to take full advantage of both opportunities.

B. Participant Training Plan (PTP)

Local areas will develop OLA PTPs that include the individual and employer attestation that he/she will meet all conditions set forth in the local OLA training agreement. Local areas may incorporate language for OLA into existing

agreements, or create specific agreements for the OLA program. Local areas may wish to consider language that addresses the following:

- Attendance requirements.
- Pass/Fail requirements.
- Communication and contact procedures with local area staff.
- Monitoring training and employment progress.
- Procedures for situations involving hardship and termination from the program.

All applicants must sign an OLA PTP that ensures full understanding of training expectations and responsibilities, how the training will be funded, and obligations for reporting and follow-up.

If all or a portion of the OLA is an OJT component, local areas, in conjunction with the ODOD BSRs are required to ensure completion of the Project HIRE, On-the-Job Training Employer Checklist and Training Agreement and ensure compliance with the Project HIRE On-the-Job Training Requirements. ODJFS will provide an OJT Training Plan template.

C. Program Duration

OLAs will be approved for short-term training programs. All OLA funded training must be completed by December 31, 2010.

D. OJT Considerations

OJTs can be provided under a contract with both public and private sector (for-profit and non-profit) employers. OJT participants must be provided with permanent employment, wages, benefits, and working conditions that are equal to those provided to regular employees who have worked a similar length of time and who are doing the same type of work. The local WIB must not enter into an agreement with an employer who has previously exhibited a pattern of failing to provide OJT participants with continued long-term employment.

Project HIRE OJT Employers will be paid up to 50% of each Trainee's regular wages during the Training Period. "Trainee Regular Wages are defined as "the amounts earned by the Trainee for work performed during the training period. Wages include regular "straight time" for actual hours worked with no overtime premium, holiday pay or fringe benefits included." The maximum Project HIRE OJT is \$6,000. The training period is up to 1040 hours (with accommodation for those with disabilities) as outlined in the individual's training plan.

See WIAPL 09-06, On-the-Job-Training, and the Federal Register Part 663.700 Subpart G in its entirety for federal OJT regulations.

E. Training Services

OLAs enhance pre-qualified job seekers' existing skills with additional training, making these individuals more attractive to prospective employers, beyond what the job seeker could have accomplished on his/her own. The job training will be funded for short-term training and may include classroom training resulting in an industry-recognized, portable credential and/or an OJT which concentrates on the hiring employer's specific requirements.

The OLA initiative is to focus on short-term training. Classroom training is defined as less than one year in duration, while OJTs are generally limited to 1040 hours. Local areas may approve classroom training using providers included in the Ohio Eligible Training Provider Online system or other training providers. Selection of the training providers is determined at the local area level by the case manager, the participant, and the hiring employer.

Training requirements and limitations are as follows:

- a) Training, including any combination of classroom or OJT, may not exceed the limit of \$6000 per participant.
- b) Classroom training must lead to attainment of a degree, a license, or an industry-recognized certificate or credential.
- c) All training must be completed by December 31, 2010.

F. OLA Awards and Management

Local areas will determine the amount of the OLA obligation and forward requests to the ODJFS, OWD for approval. Once approved by OWD, the local area will receive a confirmation of the approval with an assigned number. Each week, the OWD will batch approved requests by local area and request the Office of Fiscal Services to issue an allocation letter to the local area. The allocation letter will reference the approved account numbers so that local areas can link individuals to the allocation award.

Based upon the local area procedures, the local One-Stop systems will issue payments to providers. The local area fiscal agent will report the expenditures (both OLA account and OLA administrative costs) through the established County Finance System. Local areas may request up to 5% in administration for managing the OLA program.

G. Reporting

OLA data will be reported using the Sharing Career Opportunities and Training Information (SCOTI) Staff Assisted WIA system. The local One-Stop and BSRs will select the Special Grant office titled (PH-OLA Statewide) for Project HIRE and OLA individuals. Requests for SCOTI access to the special grant office may be sent to OMJ_Help-Desk@jfs.ohio.gov. Please use PH-OLA in the subject line.

The 3 basic intake screens will be completed for each PH-OLA seeker.

- On the third tab of Basis Intake - Program Data, 'YES' must be selected for the dislocated worker option and complete the detailed information.
- Then, from the eligibility screen, the user will click on the "Add Special Grant" button (select appropriate info from drop downs) and SAVE the data.

The user can then proceed with adding other services and training data as necessary.

H. Monitoring / Documentation

ODJFS program and fiscal monitoring will be incorporated into the existing audits and program reviews to ensure data validation and adherence to OLA implementation policy and procedures as well as all federal and state WIA guidance, policy, and procedures.

The State, DOL, or its contractors will be evaluating this ARRA-funded program. In order to gather information for this purpose, local areas may be required to accommodate site visits by providing access to key personnel and necessary data.

I. Local Area and ODOD OLA Contact Designation

Local One-Stop staff is the primary points of contact (POCs) for the OLA initiative. An alternate POC is also required. This will provide a means for on-going communication between ODOD BSRs, OWD, and the local area throughout implementation. Local areas must submit the primary and alternate POC for each One-Stop center and include the following:

- Name
- Title
- Agency
- Local Workforce Area Number
- Address
- Phone Number
- Fax Number
- E-Mail Address

POC information is to be submitted via e-mail to: WIAQNA@JFS.OHIO.GOV. Please insert this language in the subject line of the message: OLA POC.

V. Technical Assistance

For additional information, you may send your questions to the Bureau of Workforce Services: WIAQNA@JFS.OHIO.GOV, subject line: OLA.

VI. References

WIA Final Rules and Regulations - 20 CFR

Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998, Public Law 105-220, August 7, 1998

U.S. Department of Labor, Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL)
17-05, February 17, 2006.

TEGL No. 14-08, Guidance for Implementation and Wagner-Peyser Funding in
the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and State Planning
Requirements for Program Year 2009

TEGL 14-08, change 1

WIAGL 6-2000, WIA Eligibility Determination and Documentation

WIATL 27, Source Documentation for WIA Eligibility

WIAPL 09-06 On-the-Job-Training

http://jfs.ohio.gov/workforce/workforceprof/Project_Hire_OLA.stm