



**1. WORKFORCE PLAN: PART 1**

**Location    Local Plan Section and Modified Element**

*Pages 6-7    Part 1.B.1.b. Job Seekers*

*This section is updated to reflect the changing characteristics of the average job seeker in the Southwest Wisconsin Workforce Development area.*

The Southwest Wisconsin region has experienced a gradual decline in unemployed job seekers. As of December 2012, the unemployment rate for the area was 6.6% with 10,651 workers unemployed in the six-county area. This is a .2 percentage point decline from December 2011. Due to the 2012 changes to Unemployment Insurance requirements, both newly and long-term unemployed are accessing Job Center services more frequently. This allows for early intervention and assessment of the job seekers’ path to re-employment.

The description of the “average” job seeker is evolving. As the workers affected by the recession are completing training and finding training related employment, four distinct groups of job seekers are accessing area workforce services. The first group is able to use technology but possesses a less than stellar work history and work ethic; these individuals are in need of job related and employability skills but do not have the resources or inclination to complete long-term training. Conversely, a notable percentage of the job seeking public is not skilled in the use of technology. This group has a solid work history, but not the technical or computer skills needed to compete in today’s job market. The long-term unemployed make up the third group; they have sound but dated work histories and are now forced to rejoin workforce as access to other financial resources (such as UI) dwindles. Lastly, the less skilled, multi-barriered individuals remain the hardest to serve. These job seekers possess poor or no work histories. They struggle to re-enter the workforce and are becoming the focal point of basic services such as beginner computer training, adult basic education and literacy services, and economic support services. With rudimentary skills, this group of job seekers is at a distinct disadvantage in the employment market.

The job seekers identified above require broad employment and training assistance. While developing occupational skills specific to local driver industries (, food processing/manufacturing, healthcare, transportation, distribution and logistics, non-store retail trade, advanced manufacturing and agribusiness) is paramount to a healthy economy, additional resources are being dedicated to simply preparing individuals for the world of work. New avenues from online learning to accelerated training to private/public partnerships will be explored as possible solutions. Additionally, career pathway development is also essential as research and technology change the workplace so rapidly that occupational training curriculum and access needs to be concise and relevant to ensure workers are able to continually upgrade skills in order to stay employable and grow their incomes.

Job quality challenges exist with the growing number of low-wage/low-benefit jobs and lack of advancement/career pathway within smaller organizations particularly in the rural areas. Transitional jobs and work experience programs will be important for workers to demonstrate their job skills and abilities to employers. Short-term training specific to employer needs, and shorter in length compared to existing training programs, are needed to prepare workers quickly for entry-level employment, and flexible, career pathways training enabling workers to prepare for jobs with higher level skills.

It is important that workforce training and job support systems be built that help workers connect with



the education and training they need, the transitional services to succeed once employed and life-long learning classes to advance on the job. This type of three-tiered effort is necessary in order to assist workers prepare for, obtain, retain, and advance within “driver industries” (industries of significance) within our region.

P. 11 Part 1.B.3.b. Business Services Plan

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*Attachment A “Business Services Plan” was updated with wording/language changes.*