

ACCELERATE SOUTH FLORIDA: 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Action Plan



south florida
Workforce
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2009 AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT ACTION PLAN

INTRODUCTION

As we face what is arguably the worst recession in decades, the South Florida Workforce Investment Board (SFWIB) and its partners have begun the process of developing effective responses to the current economic crisis and are building consensus on how best to accelerate South Florida's economy and contain the rise in unemployment.

Indeed, South Florida's unemployment rate climbed to 7.7 percent in March 2009, an increase of 2.8 percentage points from a year ago (4.9 percent), yet was 2.0 percentage points lower than the state's unemployment rate of 9.5 percent and the national unemployment rate of 8.5 percent.

This new economic climate has created a particular challenge on how best to assist local industry retain and upgrade the skills of their existing workers and develop strategies to ameliorate the impact the slowed economy has had on displaced workers. The recent release of \$165 million in federal economic stimulus funds to local workforce boards for additional job placement services and job training has been a good start. This allocation to local workforce boards means that Region 23 will see an estimated \$21,870,444 in funding to provide workforce training for unemployed South Floridians and help local industry improve the skills of their employees.

A main conflict will lie between the need to spend quickly and the desire to spend well. Much emphasis has been placed on projects that are "shovel-ready", and with good reason. According to the Department of Transportation, for every \$1 billion spent on transportation infrastructure, 35,000 jobs will be created as a result. In anticipation of the abovementioned allocation, the SFWIB has developed the Accelerate South Florida Action Plan in order to outline a blueprint for the development of:

- a. Strategically targeted employment and training programs that are designed to assist dislocated workers, disadvantaged job seekers and the region's current workforce to develop and/or enhance occupational skills to enter, re-enter and/or remain competitive in the current workforce environment. The goal of this approach is to bring more people into the workforce, particularly young adults and residents with particular barriers to employment.
- b. Strategically targeted business incentives and economic development initiatives that are intended to sustain and enhance growth opportunities within the small business sector by building and maintaining effective links with small businesses and their representative organizations. We believe that facilitating industry workforce development through industry and training partnerships will advance learning and make workplace and industry skills development less costly and more consistent, accessible and flexible.

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However, it is important to note that the strategies outlined in our Action Plan will not be funded exclusively by the abovementioned stimulus training allocation. Instead, program implementation will be funded by a combination of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) dollars and our regular Workforce Investment Act (WIA) allocation. For example, existing workforce development strategies such as On the Job Training (OJT) and Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) can be funded by regular WIA allocation and/or ARRA/WIA funds. The Employed Worker Training (EWT) Program on the other hand, is solely being fund by the regular WIA funding allocation.

Our Action Plan is divided into three strategic categories. As outlined below, the first component of our Plan will be the development of a comprehensive business development strategy that is intended to improve the delivery of workforce development programs in the region.

Given their higher rates of unemployment and work displacement, we are proposing to expand the definition of Designated Target Areas (DTAs) which currently include: a) Empowerment/Enterprise Zones that are designated by the Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners as a Targeted Urban Areas (TUAs) and b) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Eligible Block Group or Focus Areas. In order to broaden the core focus of our efforts, distressed neighborhoods within the City Miami known as Neighborhood Development Zones will also be included in the definition of a DTA. Overall, DTAs will also define other aspects of our strategy moving forward.

That being said, the second component of our Action Plan will involve the enhancement of our current service delivery model in order to improve and expand the Career Center service delivery network. While the third and final component will be comprised of career exploration and career pathways initiatives that were developed in order to define which direction the industry demands of our region's workforce will pursue.

1. Business Development Strategies

- a. **Small Business Grant Program** - This program was developed to facilitate the provision of training and technical assistance to new and existing Small Business Enterprises (SBEs) and Micro Business Enterprises (MBEs) with the objective of furthering the economic viability of recipients.
- b. **Job Opportunities for Business Stimulus (JOBS)** - The JOBS Initiative will be created to enhance business awareness and utilization of employment and training funds. The initiative will include a marketing component that is intended to outline business related services to the employer community. It is anticipated that ten Career Services Specialists will be hired to accomplish this initiative. The initiative will utilize the 305 470-JOBS number as the central contact line.

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Business Development Strategies *continued*

- c. **On the-Job-Training** - This employment strategy is designed to reimburse employers of the costs associated with training recently hired employees.
- d. **EWT Program /Customized Training** - This program provides funding for employers who would like to improve the current skill sets of their current staff in order to improve the quality of their products or service deliver. As part of this program, employers may be reimbursed the training cost for workers that successfully complete training.

2. Career Center Delivery System Enhancements

- a. **Access Points** - To ensure community access to training and employment opportunities, Access Points have been created to accomplish this objective. Access Points are a partnership with Faith-based and Community Based Organizations (FBO/CBOs) to better serve the increasing needs of our residents and are being established to increase "universal access" to our Career Center system and engage FBO/CBOs as committed and active partners in the workforce investment system. Currently, there are five Access Points throughout the region. By July 1, 2009, SFW will open seven new Access Points.
- b. **Extended Hours of Operation** - SFW has extended its traditional hours of operation from 8am to 7pm from Monday to Thursday, thereby allowing residents and clients expanded opportunities to access our Career Center services and resources.
- c. **Unemployment Recovery Center (URC)** - SFW is implementing the URC in partnership with the Agency for Workforce Innovation in order to provide residents with dedicated support and solutions to questions and issues related to Unemployment Compensation Benefits and create temporary employment opportunities in the process.
- d. **Operation Employment** - In order to assist job seekers within the region enhance their career search opportunities, SFW will implement Operation Employment. The goal of this initiative is to hire an additional 50 Career Services Specialists to assist the current Career Center Operators help job seekers with their training and employment services needs. The Career Services specialists will be located in the SFWIB Career Centers and Access Points.

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3. Career Exploration and Career Pathway Initiatives

Career Pathways Model - Our Career Pathways Model is an economic development strategy for strengthening various industry sectors by the efficient use of SFW's resources to supply in-demand, trained employees at all career levels. The Career Pathways Model initiative will focus on following key strategic industries:

Aviation	Green Jobs
Health Care Services	Information Technology
Life Sciences/Bio-Tech	Waste Management

- **Program Design:** Develop industry specific train-to-hire initiatives to be offered to low-income and/or dislocated workers.
- **Service Delivery Area(s):** Designated Targeted Areas
- **Service Delivery Provider(s):** Career Center Operator(s)/Approved Training Provider(s)
- **Funding Source:** ARRA WIA Adult and WIA Dislocated Worker funding

Community Workforce Program - This initiative is a partnership between Miami-Dade County's Department of Small Business Development and SFW to provide construction trades training to residents of the Miami-Dade County.

- **Program Design:** Integrating the processes of recruitment, development and training to improve time-to-productivity for Miami-Dade County's Capital Construction workforce.
- **Service Delivery Area(s):** Designated Targeted Areas
- **Service Delivery Provider(s):** Career Center Operator(s)/Approved Training Provider(s)
- **Funding Source:** ARRA WIA Adult and WIA Dislocated Worker funding

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SFW Apprenticeship Program - The SFW Apprenticeship Program in partnership with Unions will be designed to provide job seekers who experience barriers to skilled employment, with pre-vocational training, support and assistance to obtain and maintain a skilled trade apprenticeship. Alternatively, a job seeker may be supported into employment, further education or training.

- **Program Design:** Individuals will be case managed by an Apprenticeship Coordinator at SFW's Career Centers and referred to the appropriate Trade Union for enrollment in the apprenticeship program.
- **Service Delivery Area(s):** Region wide
- **Service Delivery Provider(s):** Career Center Operator(s)/Approved Training Provider(s)
- **Funding Source:** ARRA WIA Adult and WIA Dislocated Worker funding

Re-training Assistance Initiative - The **Re-training Assistance Initiative** provides reemployment services and retraining assistance to individuals permanently dislocated from their employment. The retaining services is intended to provide training services through ITAs to dislocated workers allow participants greater access to permanent positions due to the exposure and references generated as a result of their participation.

- **Program Design:** Individual Training Accounts will be offered to dislocated workers for retraining in targeted growth industries.
- **Service Delivery Area(s):** Region wide
- **Service Delivery Provider(s):** Career Center Operator(s)/Approved Training Provider(s)
- **Funding Source:** ARRA WIA Dislocated Worker funding

Summer Youth Employment Program(s) - As a demonstration of our commitment to the region's future workforce, SFW has developed a Summer Youth Employment Program that will expand and promote employment and training opportunities for youth between the ages of 14-24. This program will have a particular focus on areas of strategic growth within both the public and private sectors.

- **Program Design:** Young adults will be recruited from Miami-Dade and Monroe counties for employment and career exploration opportunities.
- **Service Delivery Area(s):** Region wide
- **Service Delivery Provider(s):** Miami-Dade College, Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Florida Keys Community College and Monroe County Public Schools
- **Funding Source:** ARRA Youth funding

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Work Readiness Certification Program - This program is designed to assist low-income and/or dislocated workers acquire employability skills and obtain, maintain and/or advance in employment.

- **Program Design:** Individuals will be referred from Career Centers to Work Readiness Training Providers.
- **Service Delivery Area(s):** Designated Targeted Areas
- **Service Delivery Provider(s):** Community Based Organizations / Faith Based Organizations
- **Funding Source:** WIA Adult and WIA Dislocated Worker funding

Conclusion

In sum, we have built strong partnerships among education, business, labor, economic development and other workforce development organizations in Region 23. As a result, SFW has facilitated (and continues to facilitate) the development of rigorous and relevant educational career pathway programs in order to define which direction the demands of our region's workforce will take us.

