



Agency for Workforce Innovation

Monthly Accomplishments for April 2009

May 04, 2009

Below is a brief summary of the major activities, events, projects and accomplishments of the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI) for April 2009.

OFFICE OF EARLY LEARNING (OEL)

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Activities:

• Sample of Accomplishments

- Staff continued to work on updating and enhancing the Agency's new ARRA web site. A workgroup made up of representatives from the Agency's three business lines and the Offices of Communications and IT support was organized and is conducting regular meetings.
- A determination has been made on the proposed allocation of funds when they are received.
- The OEL/Executive Director Transition workgroup finalized a priority list of projects for targeted quality ARRA funding.
- The OEL Stimulus Task Force focused on statewide quality initiatives; Environmental Rating Systems and Child Assessments were discussed at length. The group will move forward with cost analysis and a plan for statewide dissemination. Information on specific assessment tools was obtained and disseminated to the group.
- The first \$32 million of the \$105 million in early learning federal stimulus dollars were distributed throughout the state to provide quality child care services to thousands of Florida's children. Grant awards were issued to the 31 Early Learning Coalitions on Friday, April 17th. A contract amendment was submitted for approval to release funds to Redlands Christian Migrant Association.

• Sample of Major Implementation Activities

- Staff has identified elements in the ELIS (Early Learning Information System) feasibility study as pertaining to School Readiness or Voluntary Prekindergarten.
- OEL Director attended an entrance briefing with GAO staff to discuss the GAO's work with our Agency on the ARRA funding.
- Staff received an initial response on cost allocation for the use of ARRA funds for ELIS. Staff is currently working to prepare a proposal in line with HHS guidance to determine the feasibility of pursuing the system.
- Staff prepared and submitted a revised cost allocation proposal for the use of ARRA funds for ELIS, and is currently awaiting feedback from HHS.
- Fiscal staff prepared the initial allocation of the ARRA funds for the remainder of this state fiscal year, based on the Legislative budgeted amount.
- Staff provided coalitions with information on Friday, April 17th on serving children with the ARRA funds and anticipated reporting requirements.

• Sample of Events and Milestones

- Staff is utilizing the ELIS feasibility study to determine the required cost allocation methodology to pursue, related to using ARRA funding for technology.

- A "Getting Started" document was released to explain the mechanics of setting up services in the existing EFS database. This was followed by discussion on an IT call and the release of a Data Quality Instruction.
- An amendment to the current coalition grant award to address invoicing requirements for the ARRA funds will be released in the upcoming weeks. A guidance document will also be released for invoicing requirements.

Other Activities:

- **Train the Trainer** - in collaboration with the Creative Center for Childhood Research and Training, OEL held a train the trainer session on the VPK outreach and awareness initiative, *Recipe for Success*. The session, held in Orlando, trained approximately 75 coalition and contracted service provider staff members. *Recipe for Success* provides hands on activities aligned with early learning standards, including the VPK Education Standards, for use in the classroom. The activities include reading a well known children's book and completing a cooking activity that ties in the early learning standards. The activities are simple and provide a wealth of learning for the children.
- **VPK Presentation** - Presented a session on the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) program to the Catholic Diocese of Orlando; the presentation highlighted the success of the program to date, shared the steps on becoming a VPK provider and generated discussion on ways to implement the program within their educational model. The session was shared with 70 administrative staff from the Central Florida area.
- **Rulemaking** - The Policy Unit, in conjunction with the Office of General Council, held a rulemaking workshop on the Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) program rule on April 17, 2009. The workshop was held in conjunction with the Child Care and Development Fund State Plan Steering Committee meeting to ensure optimal input was received from stakeholders. The rule discussed was:
 - **Child Care Resource and Referral:** The proposed rule will establish uniform child care resource and referral programs, addressing minimum standards for providing child care resource and referral services to families within each early learning coalition's county or multi-county service area, including the methods of providing referrals and the use of the Agency's statewide information system with respect to resource and referral.
- **Variance and Waiver Requests** - The Policy Unit, in conjunction with the Office of General Council, continues to accept and review for legal sufficiency coalition-submitted petitions for variances and waivers. The Policy Unit also coordinates with the agency clerk to notice the Department of State and to publish the petitions in the Florida Administrative Weekly. The variance process provides coalitions with the ability to address specific concerns that may be hindered by existing rule.

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION (UC) SERVICES

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Activities:

- **Sample of Accomplishments**
 - The Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC) time period for qualifying for additional benefits was extended from March 29, 2009 to December 20, 2009. As of April 16, 2009, there were 20,354 individuals paid \$1,968,223 under this new provision.
 - Senate Bill 810 was amended on April 21, 2009 to change the Extended Benefit (EB) trigger from the Insured Unemployment Rate (IUR) to the Total Unemployment Rate (TUR). If this bill becomes law, Florida will go into EB status and these benefits will be 100 percent federally funded as provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

- **Sample of Major Implementation Activities**

- UC Services and IT programmers completed the testing for the implementation of issuing \$25 FAC (Federal Additional Compensation) payments. UC Services coordinated efforts to implement this program with the Department of Financial Services and Pitney Bowes mail services.
- IT programmers implemented the programming to issue retroactive FAC payments for weeks beginning February 22, 2009, or later that were not issued when the FAC benefit programming was implemented on March 19, 2009.
- The retroactive FAC payments were generated on March 27, 2009 and totaled \$22,700,850.
- The Department of Financial Services printed the paper warrants (172,001) during the weekend of March 29, 2009.
- Pitney Bowes picked up the Retroactive FAC payments on March 30, 2009 for processing out in the mail.
- IT implemented the programming to extend the qualifying dates for EUC claims.
- IT programmers completed the programming to issue FAC payments and are completing work on the development of several reports that will provide information regarding the payment totals, number of Electronic Fund Transfers, number of paper warrants and paper warrant number ranges for DFS and Pitney Bowes.
- Pitney Bowes completed the mailing of the 172,001 Retroactive FAC payments paper warrants generated on March 27, 2009.
- Began developing system requirements for Extended Benefits (EB) programming in an effort to be prepared if the Florida Legislature enacts EB into law from the Stimulus Bill using the TUR methodology and/or if Florida triggers into an EB period at the state level using the IUR methodology.
- Implemented programming to extend the qualifying dates for EUC claims.
- Implemented programming for all reports associated with FAC and EUC that will be charged to the Federal General Revenue.

Other Activities:

- **Continued setting records in the Florida UC program:**
 - The amount of benefits paid in March 2009 set a new monthly record and totaled \$476,294,051. This was a 314.4% increase compared to the March 2008 total of \$114,918,463.
 - The amount of benefits paid during week ending March 28, 2009 set a new weekly record and totaled \$136,190,430.
- **New Temporary Federal Additional Compensation (FAC) program:**
 - Section 2002 of Division B, Title II, the Assistance for Unemployed workers and Struggling Families Act, of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 provides a \$25 weekly supplement to the unemployment compensation of eligible claimants. The Federal Additional Compensation (FAC) is payable to individuals who are otherwise entitled to regular unemployment compensation for weeks of unemployment.
 - The first additional \$25 weekly payments were processed March 19, 2009. The cumulative total paid as of April 24, 2009 is \$76,201,979 to 514,845 qualified individuals.
- **Extended Emergency Unemployment Compensation** - The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) extends the deadline for which individuals can qualify for Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC) benefits from March 29, 2009 to December 20, 2009. The cumulative EUC total paid as of April 16, 2009 is \$1,968,223 to 20,354 qualified individuals.
- **Overflow Call Center** – The Agency awarded a state contract to Faneuil, Inc., to provide additional customer service to Florida's unemployment compensation customers via an overflow call center, which will be located in Orlando, Florida. Faneuil anticipates hiring approximately 180

full-time employees and additional support staff for the call center, which is expected to handle up to 10,000 calls each day. The company currently employs 2,400 people at its 12 offices in Florida.

WORKFORCE SERVICES

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Activities:

• Sample of Accomplishments

- The Agency has received preliminary guidance from the United States Department of Labor that details the amount of additional Workforce Investment Act funds and Wagner-Peyser Act funds that the State will receive.
- The Agency also has received and executed new grants agreements for the additional Workforce Investment Act funds and Wagner-Peyser Act funds.
- The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) Program has added the two new target groups (unemployed Veterans and disconnected youth) to the WOTC reporting system.
- The Agency received official Notices of Obligation (NOO) from the USDOL for the workforce stimulus funding.
- The Agency issued official awards (Notices of Fund Availability) to the regional workforce boards for their share of the stimulus funds.
- Agency staff prepared briefing books on the Agency and its programs for the GAO team visiting the state to review the implementation of the ARRA. The briefing book contains all the Agency's one-pagers and implementation plans for the various programs impacted by the ARRA.
- The Agency staff issued draft guidelines to RWB's regarding the payment of wages/stipends to summer youth participants.
- The WFI Executive Committee met on April 15th and approved authorizing the state to submit a request to USDOL to extend the current WIA state plan, performance measures, current waivers and two new youth waivers. The letter was jointly signed by WFI President Chris Hart and AWI Interim Director Cynthia Lorenzo and sent electronically to USDOL on April 15, 2009.

• Sample of Major Implementation Activities

- Staff has been working on developing implementation plans, one-page summaries, and side-by-side summaries that detail how the ARRA changes current law.
- Legal research has concentrated on how best to ensure appropriate workers compensation coverage for participants in summer jobs programs and the tax liabilities of the youth and employers participating in the program.
- Additional workgroups related to business incentives and health insurance are being organized to identify changes to the Health Care Tax Credit and COBRA programs.
- Attended meeting with DOT on the impact of stimulus dollars on road construction.
- Staff from One-Stop Program Support and Labor Market Statistics met with representatives from the Florida Department of Education to discuss the development of a discretionary grant to USDOL that would conduct research and develop new training opportunities in those "green" occupations targeted by the ARRA.
- The Office of General Counsel and One Stop Program Support finished its research on issues related to the tax liabilities of the youth and employers participating in a summer youth program and prepared draft guidance for review by Workforce Florida, Inc.
- The Agency and Workforce Florida, Inc., held their initial meeting with staff from the Government Accountability Office (GAO). Florida is one of 17 states that will be monitored by GAO relative to the state's implementation and expenditure of funds associated with the ARRA. GAO is required to report to Congress every 60 days. During their Florida trip, the GAO also visited Regions 5 and 23.
- Staff attended all USDOL available webinars on the ARRA to gain information and insight on federal requirements under the stimulus legislation. These included state plans, waivers, technical assistance & general Q&A's.
- Agency staff participated in a Webinar with GeoSol (the EFM vendor) to discuss changes in EFM (the Employ Florida Marketplace web site) to accommodate the ARRA.
- Agency staff met with WFI on a recommended structure or plan for re-employment services (RES), which is a separate component of the stimulus plan, and for which specific funding was provided.

- Agency staff continued working with DCF for guidance on the earnings disregard of Summer Youth Program participants as it relates to TANF and Food Stamp eligibility.
- Staff met with DOE workgroup on drafting a green energy grant proposal.
- AWI posted for public comment the USDOL required extension request for the WIA State Plan and Waivers. The final WIA State Plan (which must include information about the State's Plan to implement the stimulus funds) must be approved by the WFI Board, signed by the Governor and submitted to USDOL by June 30th.
- **Sample of Events, Milestones**
 - USDOL/ETA conducted a forum in Orlando on April 23-24. The intent of this forum was to: 1) share policy guidance and direction regarding ARRA funding for Workforce Investment Act (WIA) summer youth employment program (SYEP) activities, and 2) provide attendees with the opportunity to share plans, past successes, and lessons learned from operating summer employment programs for youth.
 - USDOL Readiness Review activities took place in April with AWI and six RWBs.
 - Planning for USDOL, Employment and Training Administration (Region 3) Reemployment and Recovery Forum being held May 27-29.

Other Activities:

- **Training document updates** - Program staff updated and posted a comprehensive set of training documents, including MS PowerPoint Presentations and other technical documents for use by Welfare Transition program managers.
- **Agency Welfare Transition program staff** - met with front-line staff members at the Town South One-Stop Career Center in Tallahassee, Florida, to offer technical assistance associated with various program issues identified during a recent monitoring visit. Program staff also answered questions and provided internet-based resource information to regional staff.
- **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families** - Agency Welfare Transition staff met with the Department of Children and Families to discuss the state's performance related to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant.
- **Extension of State WIA Plan** - The U.S. Department of Labor has required all states to submit a request to extend their current Workforce Investment Act (WIA) State Plan and waivers into Program Year 2009. WFI and AWI posted on their websites the intent to extend the current State WIA Plan, performance measures and waivers as well as a request for two new youth waivers and invited the public to comment. One public comment was received. On April 15, the WFI Executive Committee approved the request to extend the current State WIA Plan, current performance measures and waivers as well as the request for two new youth waivers. A joint letter signed by the WFI President and AWI Interim Director was sent to USDOL requesting the extension and approval of the two new youth waivers.
- **Quality Assurance monitoring staff** - continued its statewide monitoring of RWB and other State contracting agency programs as required by State and federal law. Two on-site programmatic monitoring reviews and one special project review were conducted and or planned. In addition, one monitoring report was released during this same time period. Program staff also prepared an initial draft of the monitoring work plan and summer youth monitoring tool.

LABOR MARKET STATISTICS

- **Produced and released** - March 2009 Florida employment and unemployment statistics.
- **Top three employing industries** - Produced a statewide listing of the top three employing industries for each of the 800 Standard Occupational Code (SOC) occupations for the Department of Education (DOE).
- **Demonstrated** - the regional Targeted Occupations List (TOL) web application system for DOE.
- **Provided comments** - to Workforce Florida, Inc. on requests (160) for changes to the 2009-10 preliminary regional TOL.

- **Industry employment outlook** - Provided information via conference call on the industry employment outlook for Florida and the methodology used to produce employment projections for the Real Estate Advisors, Inc. of Orlando.
- **Reports and analysis** - Produced special reports and analysis on Unemployment Compensation (UC) claims data for various regional workforce boards.
- **Florida Performs Website** - Provided the Governor's Office with revised employment and unemployment statistics for the Florida Performs Website.
- **Provided census information** - on languages used; provided census information on race by area; provided estimates of poverty by census tract for a grant applicant; provided newly benchmarked nonagricultural employment information; and provided historical unemployment rates to various governmental agencies.
- **Prepared area profiles** - for elected officials in South Florida.
- **Participated with the Governor's Task Force** - on Biotech Competitiveness and the Census 2010 Complete Count Committee.
- **Help-Wanted OnLine (HWOL) system** - Conducted a demonstration on the Conference Board's Help-Wanted OnLine (HWOL) system for Workforce Florida, Inc. and AWI staff.

LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

- **Conducted meetings with state legislators** – in order to increase awareness of the Agency's services and to update the legislators on current Agency news. Those meetings included: Senators Lynn and Rich, and Representatives Galvano, Gibson, Glorioso and Pafford.

OFFICE OF GENERAL SERVICES

- **Financial Management** - Process Manager attended USDOL Region 3 meeting of administrative directors and finance officers for update and discussion of current and anticipated activities related to the ARRA.
- **Human Resource Management:**
 - Conducted two professional development workshops - *Situational Leadership* and *the Gentle Art of Verbal Self Defense*.
 - Scheduled six Workforce Boards for Plain Language and Customer Service Webinar training.
 - Conducted Plain Language/Customer Service training for RWB 5 and 17.
- **General Services** - posted several key procurements for solicitation that embrace and integrate the culture of the Agency's services. These include:
 - **ELIS System Design, Development and Implementation** – solicitation posted to the Vendor Bid System on Monday, December 15, 2008. Bid opening date is May 12, 2009.
 - **UI Benefits Debit Card Services** – solicitation was posted to the Vendor Bid System on March 9, 2009. Bid opening was April 23, 2009.
 - **UC Call Center Services** - The awarded Vendor is Faneuil, Inc. Implementation strategies are currently in progress.

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL (OGC)

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Activities:

- **Research and response** - Assisted with Agency efforts to implement the ARRA through research and response to a number of questions such as prohibited jobs and whether ARRA funds could be used for disaster recovery activities.

Other Activities:

- **Provided assistance** - to Workforce Services staff and Regional Workforce Boards (RWBs) regarding the following issues:
 - Questions regarding records retention.
 - Needs-related payments.

- Questions regarding release of client records to law enforcement officials, and providing procurement documents in response to a public records request.
 - Resolution of disallowed costs.
 - Work Experience Program activities questions regarding:
 - Payments to participants;
 - Prohibited activities;
 - Allowable activities related to disaster relief;
 - Worker's Compensation for participants.
 - Use of Workforce Investment Act funds for religious training and employment.
 - Use of stimulus funds to support the Displaced Homemaker Program.
 - Requests for Alien Labor documents.
 - Workforce participant testing.
 - Responding to a participant's grievance.
 - The Agency's Special Trust Policy.
 - Use of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds for mortgage payments.
 - Charging fees for employment services.
 - Modification & submittal of state and local workforce investment plans.
 - Criminal activity affecting a workforce board employee.
 - Liability associated with a vendor's activity on RWB property.
 - RWB staff training.
- **Rule development activities** - Worked with Office of Early Learning staff and Early Learning Coalitions (ELCs) in rule development activities, including publication of notices, public hearings and revising drafts of proposed rules to include suggestions provided by ELCs, service providers and parents.
 - **Limited English Proficiency** - Attended Agency staff meetings with Unemployment Compensation staff and participated in a conference call with Legal Services to discuss Limited English Proficiency issues.
 - **Records** - Responded to 86 public records requests; filed 13 Complaints for reimbursement of Unemployment Compensation overpayments; and five Motions for Protective Orders in response to subpoenas for Agency records.
 - **Provided the Communications Office with documents & information** - regarding a bid protest, reviewed & approved numerous WARN notices for release and answered questions regarding releasable information associated with WARN notices.
 - **Reviewed & approved** - numerous contracts, contract amendments, Interagency Agreements, and purchasing documents. Staff also participated in a conference call regarding a census data Memorandum of Understanding, and assisted the Purchasing Office in responding to questions regarding the bid protest process and document preparation & release. Guidance was also provided regarding:
 - Procurement requirements;
 - Preparing technical question responses for the UC debit card ITN;
 - Revisions to the Agency's Initiation to Negotiate (ITN) template;
 - Whether a vendor can bring its partners to a negotiation meeting.
 - **Legislation** - A number of proposed legislative bills were reviewed and suggested changes were provided by OGC staff related to
 - Unemployment Compensation Insurance modernization;
 - Inmate re-entry to the workforce;
 - Juvenile justice.
 - **Petitions for rule variances and waivers** - Reviewed and provided assistance with numerous petitions for rule variances and waivers submitted by Early Learning Coalitions. Also, a template for Agency responses was drafted.
 - **OGC Human Relations** - activities included responding to a question regarding the Agency's authority to pay employee moving expenses; assisting with five Agency employee disciplinary actions; representing the Agency at a Public Employees Relations Commission (PERC) hearing; and providing information to the Division of Risk Management regarding a slip and fall claim.

- **Assistance was provided to the Office of Civil Rights** - in responding to a company's inquiry regarding Equal Employment Opportunity surveys and in reviewing response to a complaint.

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL (OIG)

The OIG opened eleven (11) new projects that included one inquiry, one incident report, six (6) referrals and three (3) audit projects.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Activities:

- Attended two audio conferences devoted solely to ARRA activities. These conferences, titled "Government Accounting Office's (GAO's) Role in the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2009" and "Managing Federal Grants Under the Recovery Act," provided a total of 10 hours of Continuing Professional Education (CPE).
- The OIG Agency Risk Assessment Questionnaire was forwarded to Agency employees to get perspectives from the staff on areas of the Agency that may be vulnerable to undesirable outcomes and to assist in identifying OIG projects for the coming year. A special section was added to cover ARRA activities.
- Participated with the Chief Inspector General in meetings to review OIG responsibilities related to ARRA.

Investigations/Inquiries Reports:

- **Completed two investigative inquiries** - one involving a Voluntary Pre-kindergarten provider and the other involving OEL program contracting.
- **Whistleblower investigation** - Continued work on a whistleblower investigation.
- **Statewide accreditation** - Continued work to develop written directives for standards required for statewide accreditation.
- **Met with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement** - Investigative staff met to discuss processes that will be utilized to investigate suspected fraud reporting related to the ARRA funds.
- **Case tracking system**- Continued work with OEL to develop a case tracking system for public assistance fraud cases referred to FDLE.

Internal Audit Projects:

- **Coordinated on-site visit** - by the Department of Financial Services (DFS) staff for the purpose of DFS staff reviewing agency data pertaining to the Florida Single Audit Act and the Catalog of State Financial Assistance.
- **Prepared monthly reports** - of Tracked Audit Findings, Potential Audit Liability and External Reviews and Audits.
- **Issued 14 Management Decisions** - (OIG written reviews of audit reports submitted by independent certified public accountants) for eight Early Learning Coalitions and six Regional Workforce Boards.

Other Activities:

- **The Audit Unit participated in 19 hours of Continuing Professional Education** - in the field of accounting and auditing (these hours were obtained from one training session, four audio conferences and attendance at the Association of Government Accountants' monthly meeting).
- **Prepared Office of Inspector General's quarterly report** - of activity for the period of January through March 2009 for the Chief Inspector General.

DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

The Agency's Interim Director, Deputy Director and other Agency staff participated in the following events:

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Activities:

- **National Association of State Liaisons for Workforce Development Partnerships conference call** - The Deputy Director participated in the NASLWDP conference call to discuss the ARRA Implementation Update: Performance and Reporting Guidance, National Emergency Grants (NEG) Guidance, and Discretionary Grants. There was also a report from the states on ARRA Implementation/Summer Youth Implementation and a state discussion on ARRA State Discretionary Initiatives.

Other Activities:

- **14th Annual Children's Week** - Interim Director Cynthia Lorenzo and the Interim Deputy Director/Office of Early Learning Director Dr. Brittany Birken participated in the 14th Annual Children's Week news conference and festivities at the Capitol. Children's Week provides an opportunity to promote children and family issues to our state legislature.
- **Operation Full Employment** - The Director interviewed with Anna Johnson regarding the Foster Children Employment program - Operation Full Employment.
- **IT Florida Capital Day Event** - Agency staff attended the IT Florida (Information Technology) Capital Day Event in partnership with the Florida Chamber of Commerce Innovation Caucus. IT Florida serves the state as an umbrella organization, composed of both public and private technology leaders and advocates for sound public policy to the Governor, the Legislature and Enterprise Florida on technology issues and initiatives.
- **(USDOL) Region 3 Administrative Directors' & Fiscal Officers' Meeting** - The Deputy Director participated in the USDOL Region 3 Administrative Directors' & Fiscal Officers' meeting hosted by the Alabama Department of Industrial Relations.
- **Business Partnership Possibility** - The Director met with the Executive Director of the Florida Economic Development Council (FEDC) to discuss business partnerships for economic development throughout the state.
- **National Take our Daughters and Sons to Work Day** - The Director and staff celebrated *National Take our Daughters and Sons to Work Day* by holding a variety of activities for children at the Agency's Central Office (Caldwell Building). Many of the Agency's partners came to teach children about different career paths, including the Challenger Learning Center and the Tallahassee Police Department's **DARE** program.

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