

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT NOTICE	NO. 7-11
	DATE August 30, 2011

TO: STATE WORKFORCE AGENCIES
STATE WORKFORCE ADMINISTRATORS
STATE WORKFORCE LIAISONS
STATE LABOR COMMISSIONERS
STATE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE DIRECTORS

FROM: JANE OATES /s/
Assistant Secretary
Employment and Training Administration

SUBJECT: Encouraging State Partnerships and Consortia to Support the Workforce Investment System

1. Purpose. As the Federal partner in the national workforce investment system, the Department of Labor (the Department) has seen the benefits of the use of state partnership and consortia approaches to support the public workforce investment system.

2. Background. The U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (ETA) has long encouraged and continues to support the idea of states joining together in partnerships and consortia to leverage Federal funds to solve problems and provide technical solutions for needs common to member states. A benefit of the partnership and consortia approach is that programs and products developed with Federal funds become part of the public domain and are available for use by other state workforce agencies for no fee. While all states are free to choose methods of administration best suited to their needs, whether it is developing their own management and infrastructure systems, procuring private systems or participating in a partnership or consortium, in several instances, the partnership and consortia approach offers a cost effective and efficient way for states to work together to lower costs and free scarce Federal dollars for other priorities.

As we are challenged to do more and more with shrinking resources, state partnerships and consortia provide good examples of states working together to deliver technology systems and products that support critical state program operations, such as training and data collection, at a lower cost than they each could each achieve individually.

3. State Partnership and Consortia Examples. The following are examples of states that have formed partnerships or consortia to leverage Federal funds and develop collaborative solutions (in alphabetical order by title).

- **America's Job Link Alliance (AJLA)** - America's Job Link Alliance (AJLA) is a consortium of state workforce agencies and program operators. The Alliance was

formed in 2001 with the goal of designing an affordable information management system to support the operations of One-Stop Career Centers. Through collaboration, member states reduced the cost and risks of independently developing software to address changed requirements resulting from the passage of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). AJLA software is available to all states, free of charge.

For more information about AJLA products including America's JobLink (AJL), Data Analysis and Reporting Tool, and ReportLink, please visit <http://www.ajla.net/Products>.

- **Mid-Atlantic Regional Collaborative (MARC) Green Consortium** - The MARC Green Consortium conducted a regional survey in the three-state region that includes Maryland, the District of Columbia, and Virginia to define the region's green economy by identifying types of green jobs, their requirements and other occupational characteristics at the state, regional, and local levels. The MARC consortium's deliverables include: a comprehensive regional green employment, education and training survey of 10,000 area employers; state-specific research on green workforce and training providers; an online integration of the DC, MD, and VA labor market information and labor exchange capabilities; and the state of the art regional green jobs portal. For more information on the MARC Green Consortium, please visit <https://www.marcgreenworks.com/>.
- **The Midwest Group and the Southeast Group: Consortia to Develop Unemployment Insurance (UI) Benefits and Tax Systems** - In 2009, ETA awarded two consortia of four states each to conduct a feasibility study and analysis to build a core UI Tax and Benefits system. The Midwest group (Arizona, Wyoming, Idaho, and North Dakota) was awarded \$18 million for a Tax and Benefits study and the Southeast group (North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee) was awarded \$13 million for a Benefits project. The strategy of both groups would require states to standardize procedures to the maximum extent possible to build a "core" system which, once developed and tested, could then be customized to address unique state laws and integrated into the existing state information technology environment.

Currently, both consortia are in the final stages of documenting "core" functional requirements for software development and are expected to issue a Request for Proposal to solicit vendors to begin development of the system. The consortia strategy is expected to reduce the cost of modernizing the state benefit or tax systems from \$40 – \$50 million each to approximately \$25 million each.

- **Northeast Consortium's "Making Green Real"** - This is an eight-state consortium including Vermont, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island. The project aims to create a region-wide information distribution Web site, develop clear definitions of green occupations and green industries, auto-code jobs and firms based on green definitions, estimate green jobs quarterly, project six to 12 month vacancies covering green and non-green jobs, expand information based on real-time analysis, and provide information to assist educators to design new and improved training. In addition, a green employer list with green tags will be applied to the InfoGROUP employer database.

A highlight of the consortium's work is their original research into real-time labor market information, so when other states are ready to explore real-time labor market information, the background analysis will be available to them.

- **Project MIINOH Understanding the Impact of the Auto Industry Transformation and Identifying New Green Career Pathways for Impacted Workers** - Working as a tri-state consortium, Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio coordinated research efforts to assist employers, employees, and dislocated auto workers undergoing auto industry restructuring by developing alternative career pathways in energy efficiency and renewable energy industries and occupations. The project examined and conducted research in four key areas related to auto restructuring and green job transitions:
 - Auto Industry Transformation - identifying new skills and requirements in restructuring auto industries;
 - Supply Chain Transformation - examining how the auto industry has been affected and understanding the new demands and skills within this industry;
 - Alternative Career Pathways - using jobs in the green economy to help identify alternative career pathways for dislocated auto and auto parts workers; and
 - Skills Gap Analysis - identifying the current and projected skill gaps of the auto workforce, as well as the training needed to transition into green occupations and other high demand sectors.

The benefit of this consortium is that three states with similar economic issues are working on a solution together, and are jointly leveraging the expertise of the other states in the consortia.

- **Projections Managing Partnership (PMP)** - The PMP is a Federal/state consortium of economists, information and technology experts, statisticians, workforce analysts, labor market information and research directors, and specialists with the Bureau of Labor Statistics providing data inputs and output quality reviews, and ETA providing grant funding and oversight.

The mission of the PMP is to support an integrated, homogeneous nationwide program of state and local employment projections through identifying the high-growth and emerging industry sectors that will be growing or declining in two years (short-) and ten years (long-term). The PMP project provides a standard software suite to facilitate the release of standardized output reports, Internet displays, tables, Web site content, etc. Without the PMP, each state would have its own state projections program with different estimation models, software suites, and output report formats. The PMP project is more cost efficient by having a single state and local projections program that 50 states use rather than having 50 separate state projections programs. The end result is timely, consistent data that are comparable among states and regions at a cost that is lower than each state developing their own application.

- **State Information Data Exchange Systems (SIDES)** - In FY 2006, in conjunction with NASWA's Information Technology Support Center, ETA initiated the development of SIDES. SIDES is a secure Web-based system that facilitates timely and accurate communication between state UI agencies, employers, and third-party payroll

administrators (TPAs). ETA provided supplemental grant funding for the development of SIDES by a six-state consortium (including Colorado, Georgia, Idaho, Ohio, Utah, and Wisconsin) and implemented in February 2010. While the information data exchange has been implemented for separations, other data exchange formats, such as earnings verifications and monetary determinations are under development. Currently, four states and one TPA are operational. Eighteen states, one major TPA, and several large employers are in various stages of modifying their automated systems to implement SIDES.

When fully implemented by all states, SIDES is expected to help with timely and accurate eligibility determination for UI benefits as well as reduce improper payments. For more information, please visit the Introductory Guide at http://www.naswa.org/sections/pdf/2010/SIDES_Guide.pdf?CFID=1248009&CFTOKEN=70752030.

- **Westmoreland County Community College (WCCC)** - The WCCC project was funded as a Community-Based Job Training Grant and is creating a comprehensive recruitment, training, placement and retention program for high priority occupations in the natural gas drilling and production industry.

Serving 69 counties in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Ohio, with WCCC as the Western "hub" of the project and the Pennsylvania College of Technology (PCT) serving as the Eastern "hub," the Marcellus ShaleNet project brings Workforce Investment Boards, their One-Stops, industry, and training providers together to build a Marcellus-wide industry-recognized uniform training and certification program, aggregate and augment existing curricula, and adopt best practices as identified. The drilling of a single well requires 400 people working in nearly 150 occupations. The project is developing comprehensive tools for use by the One-Stops that present a realistic picture of the work, screening and assessment tools to more quickly identify specific attributes needed for the positions, and a comprehensive pre-employment program for those that move past initial screening including an industry orientation, basic safety training, and job readiness skills.

4. Action Requested. The Department encourages ETA grantees and the public workforce investment system to establish state partnerships and consortia to leverage Federal funds to solve problems and provide technical solutions for needs common to member states.

5. Inquiries. Questions regarding state partnerships and consortia or any other information included in this Training and Employment Notice should be directed to Mike Harding, in the ETA Office of Workforce Investment, at harding.michael@dol.gov.