

Greater New Bedford Workforce Investment Board, Inc.

## **ARRA EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The following is the Greater New Bedford Workforce Investment Board, Inc.'s (WIB) **American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Plan** in response to the state's Planning Questions. The Planning Questions were intended to: Elicit information with regard to actionable strategies for achieving the goals of ARRA.

The following Plan explains how workforce-specific ARRA funds will improve service delivery and training throughout the Greater New Bedford region.

### **Operations**

Much of the work and thinking from the WIB Operation Review (Feb 2009) continues as 22 tasks for improvement continue to be implemented. Under ARRA, these improvements include streamlining the intake and eligibility process, improving skills assessments and expediting communications.

The Career Centers will be implementing a **new "triage" process** that will speed the determination of whether or not a customer is "job ready." This new process quickly determines if someone has marketable skills. To further expedite this process, an **enhanced registration form** has been developed that assists in collecting additional data needed to make these quick decisions.

To **improve communications** among economic development partners, the plan also includes the use of a newly developed **Labor Needs Template**. This form is filled out by economic development entities as new public works (and other known) projects are scheduled throughout the region. This form includes information on job skills and positions contractors are looking for as they hire locally for help in completing these projects. This information will be shared openly between the Career Centers and WIB as it is received. Meetings between the economic development entities, the Career Centers, and the WIB will also be scheduled on a regular basis to review new information.

Staffing will also be realigned under ARRA to accommodate the influx of customers requesting training. The expectation is not that there will be

many “new” customers, but that more existing customers will be able to receive a **more intense level of service**. As new training is made available, more individuals will need to be determined eligible. This results in an **increase in case management and job development activities** as well.

As the WIB gears up for extensive youth activity and “green jobs” training (see below), a position on the WIB staff is also added to coordinate these needs.

**\$50k** is also being allocated for **much needed additional space** to provide Career Center training and services. This space will either be within a building in the City or in a trailer on the Greater New Bedford Career Center premises.

### Youth

With a strong emphasis on summer youth programs, the state has requested that 60% of youth funding be expended by September 30, 2009. In an effort to meet this demand, the plan includes over **\$1M for summer programs** that provide supervised worksite experiences and wages for **500 youth**.

Though funds could be spent back to February 2009, only 2% (\$32k) of ARRA youth funds were applied for planning and outreach. In contrast, 84-90% (\$1.3M-\$1.4M) is projected to be spent by September 30, 2009, with the remaining youth allocation expended by April 2010 (approx. \$150k)

### Group Training

1) In preparation for numerous infrastructure projects, and in an effort to align with state and federal priorities to include “green jobs,” \$200k is allocated for training and certifying **50 customers** (20 adult, 30 dislocated workers) in **Weatherization and Construction**. Discussions have begun with Clean Edison and the Institute for Environmental Education (IEE) to teach and test out participants for Building Performance Institute (BPI) certification and basic construction certificates.

2) A UMass Dartmouth Urban Initiative report, Dropout Prevention in the South Coast (2009), suggests training individuals for the knowledge based economy is a solid move toward economic growth. Unfortunately, low educational attainment (with 58% high school graduation rate) has

continued to plague our region, where thousands need a GED and to speak English before they can advance academically. In addition, many employers find it difficult to find workers with basic “work readiness” skills. The law requires that if any funds are to be used for adult basic education, that these services be connected to occupational skills training, of which work readiness qualifies.

The plan includes **\$269k for 80 individuals to receive access to either Pre-GED, GED or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) with a work readiness class.** Both Work Certified (a 90-hour work readiness and certification program for academic level of 8<sup>th</sup> grade and above) and Florida Works (a work readiness program for academic levels of 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grade) will be used.

3) ARRA funding also provides for an opportunity to leverage an existing \$200k EPA Brownfields Training Grant received by the City of New Bedford. Using **\$30k** of ARRA funds, **30 Brownfields trainees will also receive the 90-hour Work Certified training** and certification.

### **Flexibility**

Additionally, **\$133k will be used to pay for approximately 45 Individual Training Accounts (ITA).** ITA’s are available for eligible customers and provide an average \$3k each for such occupational training as Certified Nursing Assistants, Commercial Drivers Licenses, Computer Office training, Microsoft training, Nursing, Business Management, etc. These ITA’s are in addition to those provided under the regular WIA allocation, which to date (May 2009), has been used to train over 135 customers in occupational skills.

The plan also allocates **\$30k for short-term “enhancement” training** for individuals who do not take advantage of longer term ITA training. As more dislocated workers come to the Career Center with “some skills,” there is a growing need to offer “quick” skills training with the expectation that they will be more employable with the training in 1-3 months. The training may be of a customized nature, group training or might be “off the shelf” training; such as MS Excel, QuickBooks etc.

Because many who attend training do not have transportation (car repair, gas/bus vouchers) or child care, etc., **\$64k is set aside to provide these Support Services** for those who may need it.

## **Transparency**

Every effort will be made to provide transparency in record keeping, documentation, and program progress without violating customer confidentiality. Plan preparation included a series of forums with the public, economic development entities, superintendents, and select persons to discuss plans for using ARRA funds. In addition, 33 key stakeholders from around the region were assembled on a Regional Implementation Team that met monthly to discuss and advise on various aspects of the plan.