

TEGL 05-00 Attachment A

INTEGRATION OF THE TRADE ACT PROGRAMS WITH THE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT

WIA represents the first major reform of the nation's employment and training system in over fifteen years. The enactment of WIA provides an opportunity for significant improvements in the workforce development system that is resulting in a comprehensive, integrated One-Stop service delivery system unifying the delivery of numerous employment and training programs into a single, customer-friendly system.

In response to the implementation of WIA, along with an overall desire to improve the operation and outcomes of the Trade Act programs, the Office of Adult Services, Division of Trade Adjustment Assistance, established a Trade Act Taskforce. The Taskforce is composed of Federal, State, and local representatives from across the country who are responsible for the Trade Act Programs, as well as other One-Stop partner programs. It is charged with reviewing, analyzing, and making recommendations to the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) for improving services provided to trade-affected workers under all of the Trade Act programs (TAA and NAFTA-TAA, including the Secondary Worker program).

ETA places a high priority on providing guidance to the system on how the Trade Act programs should be effectively integrated into the One-Stop service delivery system under WIA. The Taskforce decided that the most effective way to provide this information was to begin furnishing materials that State and local officials and practitioners should consider while developing their workforce investment systems. More comprehensive and detailed guidance addressing specific integration issues will be provided in the near future.

Vision: Integrating the Trade Act Programs into One-Stops

The implementation of WIA provides an ideal opportunity to strengthen the linkages between the Trade Act programs, the adult and dislocated worker programs funded under WIA, and the employment services authorized by the W-P Act. Congress made significant changes to the W-P Act regarding the delivery of labor exchange services through the One-Stop service delivery system. Congress also emphasized integration of the Trade Act programs by amending the Trade Act to include a provision (WIA Section 321) on coordination with the WIA programs and other partner programs, as well as mandating that Trade Act programs be partners in the One-Stop service delivery system.

All too often, the Trade Act and JTPA-Title III/WIA-Title I dislocated worker programs have been viewed as distinct, unrelated programs when they are, in fact, very similar. Trade-affected workers are--by definition--dislocated workers. Complete integration of the services that all dislocated workers receive is an essential element of the seamless service delivery system that is envisioned under WIA. A review of best practices has shown that this

integration improves services, maximizes the efficient allocation of available resources, and enhances outcomes for all customers.

Most of the reemployment services that are provided to trade-affected workers under the Trade Act programs also fall within the WIA sequence of services (core, intensive, and training). These services, available to all eligible dislocated workers, include assessment, counseling, development of an employability plan or individual service strategy, and case management. These services should be the same for both Trade Act programs' participants and other dislocated workers being served through WIA and the W-P Act programs. The Trade Act programs provide resources that trade-affected workers may access to receive training and/or job search and relocation allowances, in addition to reemployment services provided by WIA and W-P Act programs, to expedite their return to suitable employment. Attachment B identifies these services as core, intensive, and training, and also identifies the funding sources that may be used to pay for the provision of these services.

WIA also requires that adults and dislocated workers--including those affected by trade--are to receive services through a One-Stop service delivery system, and that all individuals must have universal access to informational and core services. Since trade-affected workers meet the WIA definition of dislocated workers, these individuals may be receiving services through the WIA Title I dislocated worker program or other partner programs prior to their certification of eligibility to apply for benefits and services under the Trade Act programs.

Sharing information and educating One-Stop partners about the advantages of fully integrating the Trade Act programs and their services and resources into the State and local One-Stop system will enhance the partnerships envisioned in WIA. The Trade Act programs can contribute valuable training resources, as well as subsistence resources (per diem, travel payments, trade readjustment allowances (TRA)), that will enhance the provision of services to all One-Stop customers by freeing up WIA and other partner program resources for other participants. Having Trade Act programs work more closely with One-Stop partners will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of all One-Stop partner programs.

Extensive integration of all partner programs in the One-Stop center is desirable, and staff located in the One-Stop center should, first and foremost, consider themselves employees of the One-Stop, consistent with Federal laws. Certain program benefits and services of some One-Stop partner programs, including some elements of the Trade Act programs, are, among other Federal and State requirements, required to be conducted by staff hired under State merit-based personnel standards. States and local areas are encouraged to allow flexibility in the service delivery system for the Trade Act programs in the One-Stop, while also ensuring that the programs' merit staffing requirements are met. One-Stop operators have the option to determine what funding sources they will use to conduct Trade Act program benefits and services activities. However, it is important to highlight that some of the Trade Act program benefits and services funded under the Trade Act, Title III of the Social Security Act (which funds the administration of Unemployment Insurance (UI) programs), and the W-P Act must be provided by State merit-staffed employees.

Next Steps

Over the next several months, ETA will develop and disseminate additional guidance that will assist State and local staff in fully integrating the Trade Act programs into the One-Stop system. ETA intends to share: best practices for designing effective service models for Trade Act program participants; guidance for developing agreements (Memoranda of Understanding) with Local Boards and One-Stop partners; guidance on training and capacity building for the One-Stop system; ideas for improving communication among Federal, State, and local partners; ways of assessing program effectiveness; and guidance on using other resources effectively--including WIA National Emergency Grants--to supplement the limited resources available under the Trade Act programs.

Methodology

In developing such guidance, the Taskforce will focus on several key principles that will guide its work, including:

- recognizing that early intervention is critical to a dislocated worker's successful adjustment;
- allowing as much flexibility as possible for State and local areas to build a workforce investment system that meets the needs of their clients;
- promoting a seamless one-stop service delivery system that is customer friendly;
- eliminating duplication of assessments and other services amongst One-Stop partners; and
- advocating a no-wrong door approach--the worker receives the services required to return to work, no matter where the individual enters the system.

In addition to these principles, the ten quality principles developed by the National Rapid Response Workgroup (now the Dislocated Worker/Rapid Response Workgroup) have a direct relationship to the Trade Act programs and will be considered and incorporated--when appropriate--into guidance and policy recommendations developed by the Taskforce. Attachment B contains a discussion of the ten quality rapid response principles and their relationship to the Trade Act programs.

The Taskforce will also develop a communication strategy for disseminating guidance and policies to State and local areas through technical assistance, training opportunities, conferences, and USDOL directives. State and local areas are strongly encouraged to use these products as they develop strategies for effectively integrating the Trade Act programs and their clients into the One-Stop service delivery system.