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DOL announces final round of TAACCCT grantees

On September 29, Vice President Biden, along with Department of Labor (DOL) Secretary Perez and Department of Education (DoEd) Secretary Duncan, announced $450 million in grants to community colleges and community college consortia as part of the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grant program.

The grants, which are awarded to community colleges and other eligible institutions of higher education—including consortia of two or more institutions—support education and training programs of less than two years that improve the skills of workers who have lost their jobs as a result of foreign trade. Awards were made to 71 grantees across 270 community colleges, working in partnership with more than 400 employers.

DOL was particularly concerned with making this round of the TAACCCT grants “job-driven” and consistent with the principles identified in the Administration’s job-driven training action plan. To that end, DOL announced in the solicitation for grant applications that for the first time, eligible entities whose proposals addressed the following broad goals would receive larger grants: (1) scaling in-demand job training across the country through national industry partnerships; (2) advancing education and training to ensure seamless progression along a career pathway; and (3) improving statewide employment and education data integration and use.

Eligible entities were also strongly encouraged to demonstrate their ability to establish or leverage existing relationships with employers. Eligible entities are required to work with at least two employers, as well as a regional industry representative for each sector served by the program. At a minimum, applicants were required to demonstrate that the employers and industry representatives will serve on the project’s leadership team, help implement program strategies and goals, identify and map the necessary skills and competencies for the programs, assist with curriculum development and program design, and where appropriate, assist with the

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design of an assessment or credential that will address industry skill needs.

Alongside today’s TAACCCT announcement, the Administration announced three other job-driven initiatives:

- A report released by the President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) that makes recommendations for using technology to match workers to jobs based on their skills and for building stronger connections between employers and training providers to help curricula keep pace with the needs of employers.

- A report by the Department of Education, recommending specific actions the public and private sectors can take to improve adult education and make it more job-driven.

- $2 million in Pathways to Careers: Community College for Youth and Young Adults with Disabilities grants. Funds will be used to develop, test and evaluate new integrated education and career training strategies to better serve youth and young adults with disabilities and prepare them for high-quality employment.

The TAACCCT program was initially established as part of the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) reauthorization under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). As part of the 2010 budget reconciliation bill, Congress appropriated $2 billion for the four years (fiscal year 2011-2014) the program was authorized. Today’s announcement marks the final round of TAACCCT awards. The Administration has proposed replacing the TAACCCT grants with a new, four-year, $6 billion Community College Job-Driven Training Fund grant program—that would include $2 billion to expand registered apprenticeships—but enactment requires congressional action.

**DOL awards innovation grants**

On September 24, the Department of Labor announced over $50 million in Workforce Innovation Fund (WIF) grants to 11 state and local entities in nine states. These grants will be used to support innovative employment and training activities.

Grant awards range from $2.9 million to nearly $12 million to state workforce agencies and local workforce investment boards, and were awarded with the
Administration’s job-driven training principles in mind. Further details on the winning proposals have not yet been released.

According to the solicitation released by the DOL Employment and Training Administration (ETA) in May, the grants will be used to fund strategies that will improve performance and service delivery within the public workforce system. Possible strategies identified by improving coordination among programs and partners; improving service delivery at American Job Centers (AJCs); piloting or scaling programs and strategies that improve linkages between employment and training services and business needs; and implementing new procurement strategies.

The solicitation also strongly encouraged eligible entities to develop and implement these strategies in partnership with other relevant entities in the local or regional areas, and indicated that grants awarded will fall into three categories: Project Type A (new and untested ideas supported by strong logic but whose efficacy has not been studied); Project Type B (promising ideas that have been implemented or evaluated previously, and have indicated some potential for positive impacts); and Project Type C (adapting or scaling proven ideas that are supported by strong evidence of positive change).

ETA plans to issue another WIF grant solicitation this fall, which will support planning grants for states seeking to undertake large-scale systems reform and alignment projects that require further planning and preparation.

Authorization for the WIF was eliminated by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, so it is possible that the solicitation to be released this fall will be the final one for the program.

**FNS announces new SNAP E&T pilot grants**

On August 25, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) released a Request for Applications (RFA) for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment & Training (SNAP E&T) pilot program.

The 2014 Farm Bill, which authorizes SNAP E&T, made several critical improvements to the SNAP E&T program, including providing increased funding for SNAP E&T, introducing new monitoring and reporting requirements, and establishing pilot grants to test innovative strategies to improve employment outcomes for individuals on SNAP. These important changes to SNAP represent an opportunity for states that previously may not have taken full advantage of the SNAP E&T program, to pursue new strategies to help SNAP recipients move into stable employment.
Pilot grants will be awarded to up to ten states, and will provide them with additional funding to test E&T strategies.

have taken full advantage of the SNAP E&T program, to pursue new strategies to help SNAP recipients move into stable employment, and ultimately, move off of SNAP.

The Farm Bill authorized $200 million for the pilot projects, an independent evaluation, and related administrative costs. Pilot grants will be awarded to up to ten states, and will provide them with additional funding to test E&T strategies designed to enable more SNAP participants to obtain unsubsidized employment, raise SNAP participants’ earnings, and reduce their reliance on public assistance. Grant awards will range from $5 million to $25 million. The types of E&T programs states could operate includes any existing SNAP E&T components and services, as well as work and education and training programs allowed under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.

The RFA identifies a set of strategies and approaches FNS is interested in seeing in project proposals, including activities or services targeting populations with significant barriers, case management, career pathways, work-based learning, and public private partnerships. Additionally, in accordance with the Administration’s job-driven training action plan, the RFA selection criteria incorporates elements of the job-driven checklist, which agencies are to use in reviewing grants relating to training or employment.

Earlier this year, NSC hosted a webinar explaining the major changes made to SNAP E&T under the Farm Bill, and highlighting opportunities for states to expand their E&T programs, and in July, National Skills Coalition, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and Seattle Jobs Initiative (SJI) hosted representatives from 11 states interested in developing, strengthening or expanding Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training (E&T) programs in their states.

As states move forward with expanding their E&T programs, NSC will provide guidance and assistance on how education and training can be better integrated into E&T. Visit NSC’s website for more SNAP E&T resources.

Applications are due to FNS by November 24, 2014. FNS plans to award the grants in February 2015.
Congress Moves Forward with FY 2015 Appropriations

In mid-September, Congress passed a short-term stopgap bill to fund the government through December 11, 2014. The measure maintains level funding from fiscal year (FY) 2014. Congress will likely consider a longer-term spending bill when it resumes after the November elections.

Earlier this year, the Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies (Labor-H) appropriations subcommittee released its FY 2015 spending bill. The bill, which is unlikely to move forward before the August recess, would increase funding for certain WIA programs. Similar legislation was introduced in the House in September by Labor-H subcommittee ranking member Rosa DeLauro (D-CT). The Campaign to Invest in America’s Workforce (CIAW), which NSC co-convenes, the Committee for Education Funding, and Coalition for Health Funding wrote to the House and Senate Appropriations committees to express support for both bills, while noting that overall funding for discretionary programs must be increased.

The Senate Labor-H bill provides for increases in Workforce Investment Act (WIA) formula funds as well as increases to other workforce programs, including migrant and seasonal farmworker programs, Native American programs, YouthBuild, and reintegration for ex-offenders programs. The bill would increase the governor’s reserve to 10 percent (up from 8.75 percent in FY 2014), and would maintain current funding levels for the Workforce Data Quality Initiative and Women in Apprenticeships and Non-Traditional Occupations (WANTO). Though it does increase funding in some areas, citing budget constraints, the bill does not include funding for the Workforce Innovation Fund (WIF), WIA incentive grants, or sector strategies grants (as proposed in the President’s FY 2015 budget).

While it is a positive sign that the Senate appropriators provided for funding increases for some workforce programs, the funding levels proposed in the bill are still insufficient to meet our nation’s needs. The constraints imposed on the Appropriations committee by budgetary spending caps and the sequester make it nearly impossible to make adequate investments in education and training programs and other discretionary programs. NSC has strongly urged Congress to find a long-term solution to end sequestration and lift the budgetary caps and will continue to weigh in with policymakers on funding as the appropriations process moves forward.
White House Releases Job-Driven Training Action Plan; President Signs WIOA

On July 22, the White House released its job-driven training action plan following Vice President Biden’s review of federal job-training programs. The release of Ready to Work: Job-Driven Training and American Opportunity coincided with the President’s signing of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), legislation reauthorizing the Workforce Investment Act. Following the release of the national action plan, National Skills Coalition prepared an analysis of key provisions outlined in the report.

The action plan emphasizes strategies NSC has long advocated for, including industry engagement through sector partnerships, development of career pathways, using data to align training with labor market needs, and providing funding to seed and scale proven or promising strategies.

The action plan is a result of a Presidential Memorandum instructing the Vice President to lead an across-the-board review of federal job training programs in order to identify and implement steps the Administration can take to make these programs more “job-driven”—that is, employer-led, connected to real jobs in local or regional labor markets, and resulting in skills and credentials that help individuals succeed in the labor market.

NSC is pleased to see the Administration and Congress working to make our workforce training programs more job-driven, integrated, transparent, and effective, and looks forward to working with the White House and the agencies as they begin to implement the action plan.

DOL Holds WIOA Town Halls, Webinars

In August and September, the Department of Labor held a series of webinars on various WIOA implementation topics. The webinars, which were conducted in coordination with the Department of Education, were used to obtain input on WIOA implementation from a range of interested stakeholders. Transcripts, presentation slides, and chat logs from each session are available on the DOL Employment and Training Administration’s WIOA Resource page. DOL has also begun holding regional town halls to gain additional stakeholder input. A full list of plan town halls has not yet been released.
The Department of Education has also begun seeking stakeholder input on WIOA implementation. Lin August, DoEd’s Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE), in collaboration with the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) posted a blog asking stakeholders to submit comments and recommendations on implementation of WIOA Titles II and IV. OCTAE also hosted a webinar on the adult education and literacy provisions of WIOA on August 28.

WIOA requires DOL and DoEd to release draft regulations for WIOA implementation in January 2015. Once the draft regulations are released, there will be an opportunity to submit public comments on the regulations to the agencies.

**DOL Clarifies DACA Youth’s WIA Eligibility**

On July 15, the DOLETA issued a Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) clarifying that under the Workforce Investment Act’s non-discrimination provisions, work-authorized Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) participants are eligible for WIA and Wagner-Peyser programs.

NSC applauds DOLETA for issuing this guidance. In February, NSC, United We Dream and the National Immigration Law Center sent a memo to the Department of Labor requesting official clarification on the issue.

This TEGL applies to all programs authorized under WIA, including Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs; National Emergency Grants; Indian and Native American Program; National Farmworker Jobs Program; Reintegration of Ex-Offender Program; YouthBuild; and Job Corps. The TEGL also indicates that Wagner-Peyser services are available to all DACA participants.

While not mentioned in the TEGL, it should be noted that the nondiscrimination provisions under current WIA law remain the same under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

Two years ago, President Obama implemented deferred action on deportation for some undocumented youth who came to the United States as children and pursued education or military service. According to the action, in order to meet the education requirement, an individual must be in “an education, literacy, or career training program (including vocational training)
that is designed to lead to placement in postsecondary education, job training, or employment.” In order to meet this requirement, DACA recipients in certain communities will attempt to access Title I programs in order to continue with education and workforce training opportunities.

Without immigrants and their children, the U.S. workforce cannot expect to replace the number of workers projected to retire from the labor force over the next 25 years. Middle-skill jobs, which require more than a high school education but less than a four-year degree, currently comprise the largest segment of jobs in the U.S. economy and will continue to for years to come. At present rates, by 2020, the United States will lack 5 million workers with the necessary postsecondary education and training. Without adequate investments in a skilled workforce, jobseekers will struggle to succeed in the labor market, and employers will struggle to compete in the global economy.

NSC applauds the Department of Labor for its efforts to ensure the United States has a workforce with the skills that families and industries need to compete and prosper.