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RAPID RESPONSE & LAYOFF ASSISTANCE	

PURPOSE

Rapid Response and Layoff Assistance (LOA) are early intervention services that assist both employers and employees affected by layoffs or plant closures. These services provide access to user-friendly resources and information to help transition affected workers into reemployment. This policy is intended to provide clarity in defining the roles and responsibilities of delivering rapid response services within the Coos, Curry, and Douglas County Workforce Area.

BACKGROUND

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires states to implement statewide rapid response and layoff assistance activities to assist employers and impacted workers as quickly as possible following the announcement of a permanent closure, mass layoff, or natural or other disaster resulting in a mass job dislocation.

REFERENCES

WIOA Section 134
 Training & Employment Guidance Letter 19-16
 Training & Employment Notice 23-14
 Training & Employment Notice 3-10

POLICY

SOWIB and its contracted services providers will comply with Higher Education Coordinating Commission Office of Community Colleges and Workforce Development (CCWD) policy and state-issued and federal-issued guidance to implement Layoff Assistance (LOA) projects to support eligible participants.

All LOA projects are expected to reflect the results of an early intervention process activated through the state and local Rapid Response Procedures. Rapid Response activities are provided to employers and workers when a layoff or closure is going to occur, is occurring or has occurred. These activities include: immediate and onsite contact with the employer, representative of the affected workers, and the local community (community-based organizations); information on unemployment insurance, WorkSource Oregon (WSO)

Centers, employment and training services, and Trade Act; guidance and/or financial assistance in establishing a Transition Team; assistance to develop a coordinated response to the dislocation event; and, as needed, LOA funds adapted to meet the particular layoff or closure. The results of all Rapid Response activities are to be clearly documented to allow for and aid in request for layoff assistance funding.

Layoff Assistance Funds

State-funded layoff assistance funds are available to provide targeted, localized support of significant dislocations. When faced with a qualifying event, SOWIB will make a determination as to which type of funding (if any) to apply for, as part of the Rapid Response activities described above.

There are three categories of State funds available for LOA projects:

- **Additional Assistance:** Funds for Additional Assistance projects are awarded on a case-by-case basis to temporarily expand service capacity to address the needs of a specific group of workers impacted by layoff or closure that does not meet the threshold of a National Emergency Grant (NEG) application, and for which regular Dislocated Worker formula funding is not available or sufficient. Generally, Additional Assistance funds are a permanent award to a local region and are aligned with other project funding.
- **Gap Fill:** Gap Fill funds are used when an NEG has been requested from the Department of Labor (DOL). Funds are intended to be used for the same purpose of the proposed NEG project and are used to provide services between the NEG application and the date that grant approval notice is issued. Expenditure and participant plan information included in the NEG application will serve as the basis for the award of these funds. If the proposed NEG is awarded, unused Gap Fill funds are typically returned to the State so that the funds can be used to support the activities of other Gap Fill projects that are awaiting an NEG award determination. If the proposed NEG is not awarded, the State has the discretion whether or not to make the funds permanent.
- **Rapid Response:** These funds are available to support pre-layoff services. Pre-layoff services may include the provision of worker information sessions, the establishment of a layoff transition team, hiring peer support advocates, providing on-site workshops, establishing and staffing an on-site resource room and staff time to explore layoff aversion strategies. Typically, Rapid Response funds are requested as reimbursement for services provided by Dislocated Worker Liaisons (DWL) during Rapid Response activities as defined in the SOWIB Rapid Response procedures and program standards. Pre-layoff services are provided at the company level and do not require participant enrollment in WIOA.

National Emergency Grants

In addition to State-funded LOA projects, there are funds available from DOL in the form of National Emergency Grants. These grants are awarded for projects meeting the DOL threshold for significant dislocations. Through its Rapid Response processes, SOWIB in cooperation with partner agencies, determine if a dislocation event meets NEG criteria and if this level of assistance is needed. If so, SOWIB will submit an NEG application with a project description. These funds are generally awarded on a multi-year basis and are used to leverage other funds available (such as Trade Act and WIA). Funds support staff engagement with dislocated workers to provide assistance in developing a course of action for re-employment. Services may include assessments to help a worker identify skill gaps, workshops to enhance job search and basic skills, supportive services, and vocational or occupations skills training expenses (training funds are driven by the rules of the grant award).

PROCESS

Participant Eligibility

All participants in an LOA Project must be determined eligible except for those receiving Rapid Response-funded pre-layoff services described above. LOA project participants must complete the WSO registration process, and be determined eligible for and receive a staff-assisted service funded by the WIA Title IB Dislocated Worker Program. A participant may also need to comply with specific eligibility conditions of the grant and/or the approved target population. Eligibility will be documented in both electronic and paper participant records, in accordance with all applicable SOWIB procedures.

Participant Enrollment

LOA projects are intended to provide time-limited assistance to workers impacted by a particular layoff or closure. Since workers will be eligible for services (upon receipt of layoff notice or company announcement) at the time an application for funding is submitted, all project participants must be enrolled within six months of a grant award date.

Dual Enrollment Projects

Dual enrollment LOA projects are coordinated between WIA and Trade Act to provide support and assistance to trade-certified dislocated workers. The primary purpose of LOA funding is to support activities such as career counseling, case management and supportive services. If an activity is allowable under Trade Act, that is the first source of funding. Trade Act funds must be utilized first and LOA project grants will be used to fill gaps for services not allowed by Trade Act funding. No training expenses should be allocated to WIA funding in a dual enrollment LOA project unless special circumstances are identified and justified in the grant application. Coordination with Trade Act must occur and be documented prior to obligating LOA project grant funds to avoid duplication.

Veteran's Priority

Veteran's Priority of Service applies to all LOA projects. To obtain priority of service the veteran must meet the program eligibility requirements for the LOA project and must be a dislocated worker from the approved target population.

Individual Employment Plan (IEP)

Each LOA project participant must have a signed IEP that identifies the participant's employment goals, training goals (if applicable), and the combination of services required for the participant to attain employment. The IEP is not a financial contract and does not guarantee services or payments. Provision of services identified in the IEP is dependent upon the receipt of federal and/or state funds.

Supportive Services

Supportive Services (transportation, child/dependent care, household assistance, etc.) may be provided to LOA project participants as outlined in the project plan and in accordance with SOWIB supportive services policies and procedures. All support services are to be documented including: justification of the need, lack of other resources to provide the support, and the timeframe for the supportive services (one month, school quarter, etc.).

Limits

Some LOA project grants, or SOWIB at its discretion, may establish cost-per-participant limits on supportive services (cost-per). Any supportive services provided a participant over the established grant supportive service cost-per must be approved by the SOWIB grant manager. In no circumstances can expended supportive service funds exceed the grant contract budget. This limit is for the life of the grant and is not re-set each program year.

Monitoring

All LOA projects will be monitored in accordance with state, federal and SOWIB policy and procedures on monitoring. Monitoring by SOWIB will be conducted at least one time during the life of the grant.

Questions regarding this policy should be directed to the Executive Director of SOWIB.