



Brad Henry
Office of the Governor
State of Oklahoma

May 23, 2005

Mr. Joseph C. Juarez
Regional Administrator, Dallas/Denver Region
U.S. Department of Labor
Washington, D.C. 20210

Dear Mr. Juarez:

Attached is Oklahoma's 2-Year WIA-Wagner-Peyser Plan as required and requested by the Department of Labor. It has been posted to multiple web sites in order to be made available for comments and has been prepared in cooperation with and the support of the Governor's Council for Workforce and Economic Development, which serves as the state's Workforce Investment Board.

While this plan has been put together in a very short time frame to meet the DOL deadline, it is ultimately part of a larger comprehensive plan to grow a greater Oklahoma.

Oklahoma is taking seriously the call to create a comprehensive workforce system that is aligned with and in support of economic development. To this end, over 18 months ago, I appointed Norma Noble as Deputy Secretary of Commerce for Workforce Development. In addition, the Employment Security Commission was moved from the Human Services Cabinet to the Commerce Cabinet and the State Workforce Investment Board was re-constituted as the Governor's Council for Workforce and Economic Development.

These changes sent a strong signal that economic development was to be the primary driver of the workforce system. Subsequently, the Office of Workforce Solutions was established within the Department of Commerce to coordinate Council staffing, provide planning and policy oversight, as well as partnership and resource development. In addition, a Workforce Solutions Staff Team consisting of decision makers from eight state agencies plus local representatives was created to eliminate barriers, create efficiencies, and assist in staffing the work of the Council to develop a comprehensive system.

As a result of these efforts, the Governor's Council for Workforce and Economic Development has developed a strategic plan that is now being implemented. The Council's strategic plan is the basis of and the driving force behind this 2-Year Plan now being submitted to DOL, therefore, the Council's Strategic plan is also being submitted as an appendix to this document.

The ultimate goal of the plan is to provide quality access to quality services that will create a quality workforce and ultimately link Oklahomans to quality jobs. It will create a workforce development system that supports economic development and provides more efficient comprehensive services to business.

To accomplish this goal, the plan outlines the following major initiatives:

Quality access to quality services through system integration

- Workforce Investment Act Programs and the Employment Service must act as a single service delivery unit
- Local Workforce Investment Boards must be independent of program operation
- Local Workforce Investment Boards must serve as a broker in coordinating all workforce related services within a regional area in collaboration with economic development
- Business Services Teams representing education, employment and economic development will work to provide comprehensive integrated service to business
- A state level Memorandum of Understanding between state agencies to work toward common goals, eliminate duplication and support common objectives will be developed
- The Workforce Solutions Staff Team consisting of agency decision makers will continue to work to eliminate barriers between agencies, and to find solutions to common issues
- Create a state Youth Council to build appropriate connections among the workforce system, employers and community support systems.

Quality workforce development

- Providing comprehensive, integrated labor market, workforce and economic development information so that recommendations and decisions can be based on real data and agreed upon facts
- Provide a common understanding that economic development in the 21st century will be driven by the skill levels of the workforce. A highly skilled workforce will allow existing business to expand and attract new higher paying industries with quality jobs for Oklahomans.
- Transition the high school senior year to better prepare students for post-secondary education and/or work
- Developing a pipeline of skilled workers that will retain and attract business
- Development of career pathways within industry clusters
- Comprehensive career management for skills development and lifelong learning
- Demand-driven statewide skills certification process using common assessment processes.
- Provide current workforce data and analysis for quality decision-making at the local and state levels.

Quality business services

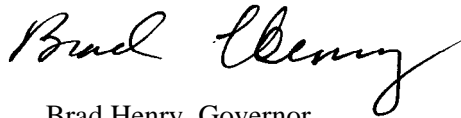
- Provide a single point of contact to broker services to business
- More efficient and comprehensive recruitment services in support of economic development
- Providing qualified applicants through credentialing processes
- Establish a Business Service Center to coordinate statewide recruitment projects, provide industry cluster resources and support business service teams
- Better assist with and broker human resources services to small business
- Develop an ongoing process to determine customer requirements that will create a demand-driven system

Ultimately, this plan provides the framework for a comprehensive system that will impact Oklahoma in the following ways:

- Create a system linking education, employment and economic development that will eliminate duplication, leverage resources, create efficiencies and better serve Oklahoma business and citizens.
- Increase the number of Oklahoman's that obtain four-year degrees
- Improve training opportunities for Oklahoma's incumbent workforce
- Provide better, more comprehensive career decision making data so that Oklahomans can make informed career choices
- Better prepare Oklahoma high school graduates for post-secondary education or the workforce
- Reduce drop-out rates
- Provide better and more comprehensive data to business as they make decisions regarding expanding in or locating to Oklahoma.
- Improve the overall skill level of Oklahomans to retain and attract quality jobs

We believe that this plan, in conjunction with the strategic plan of the Governor's Council, will provide Oklahoma with a roadmap for development of a dynamic and integrated workforce and economic development system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brad Henry". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brad Henry, Governor
State of Oklahoma

cc: Cynthia Green, U.S. Department of Labor