



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

317 West Main Street, Boise, Idaho 83735-0510

TRANSMITTAL # 7

MEMORANDUM

June 13, 2013

TO: Workforce Development Council

FROM: Tim Komberec, Chair

SUBJECT: Policy discussion on possible WDTF programs

ACTION REQUESTED: Discussion

Background

Members of the council have expressed an interest in discussing or brainstorming the development of other possible programs using Workforce Development Training Fund (WDTF) in order to enhance Idaho's workforce.

The statutory language that creates the WDTF mandates that money in the training fund be used "to provide training for skills necessary for specific economic opportunities and industrial expansion initiatives" and "to provide training to upgrade the skills of currently employed workers at risk of being permanently laid off . . . based on procedures, criteria and performance measures established by the [workforce development] council..." (Idaho Code § 72-1347B (2) and (3).

The council is able to consider developing new training programs using the WDTF if they directly respond to the need for job skill training for "specific economic opportunities and industrial expansion initiatives" or for employees "at risk of being permanently laid off" as outlined in the enabling legislation.

Recent History

In the past year the following two new programs using WDTF have been approved by the council:

- On May 8, 2012 the WDTF "Talent Development Program" was approved by the council. This program was designed to provide immediate assistance to current and former Idaho unemployment insurance claimants during the recent economic downturn.

The program allows grants to eligible companies to train employees who are filling job vacancies provided the company hires an applicant who is currently receiving or who has exhausted Idaho unemployment insurance benefits. The WDTF Talent Development Program was to remain in effect while the state unemployment rate remained above seven percent. Because the state unemployment rate has now fallen below seven percent this program is currently inactive.

- On March 13, 2013 the WDTF “Industry Sector Grant” was approved by the Council. The goal of this program is to increase employment and wages of Idaho workers by providing skill training to meet the needs of industry sector(s) to develop an applicant pool of skilled workers for Idaho businesses. Grant funds may be used by Idaho public post-secondary schools to develop new training programs or modify existing programs to build capacity to meet this need. The applicant and the grantee would be the public post-secondary school that partners with multiple businesses with similar workforce needs. Guidelines and criteria are currently being finalized.

Other Possible WDTF Programs

One idea would reactive the WDTF “Talent Development Program” outlined above by lowering or eliminating the current seven percent unemployment rate threshold. This could be particularly helpful because of the current low level of funding of the WIA Dislocated worker program.

An “incumbent worker scholarship program” has also been suggested as another possible enhancement to the WDTF to encourage increased training for current employees of eligible Idaho companies. Under such a program, an employee would be identified through an application process to enroll at an Idaho post-secondary educational institution in a field of study related to the company’s identified workforce needs. The company would contribute 25 percent of the scholarship to pay for the training and the remaining would come from the WDTF. The program could be used for the employee to gain a certificate, associate’s degree, bachelor’s degree, master’s degree, or registered apprenticeship program. The goal would be to increase wage gains and promotional opportunities for current employees through enhanced educational attainment.

Contact: Jenny Hemly (208) 332-3570 x 3480
 Susan Simmons (208) 332-3570 x 3361