



ULSTER COUNTY
OFFICE OF EMPLOYMENT AND
TRAINING

2009 ANNUAL REPORT
to the
Ulster County Legislature

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I. MISSION STATEMENT

The **Ulster County Office of Employment and Training (OET)** is the county department that assists county residents with upgrading skills, providing employment resources and job search techniques and training for occupational skills. Entirely funded with federal resources from the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), OET oversees the planning, strategizing and expenditure of that fund source so that training is provided to the Adults, Dislocated Workers and Youth of Ulster County.

The **Ulster County Workforce Investment Board (WIB)** an appointed volunteer board of business leaders, community leaders and education professionals. Its statutory mandate is to set policies and oversee all program operations and funding expenditures. Board members are appointed by the Ulster County Executive and serve a two-year term. These Ulster County community leaders develop policy that reflects the distinct needs of local businesses and provide guidance to the educational community in developing training programs that fit the specific needs of local industry. The WIB's purpose is to develop and support policies designed to increase employment opportunities, improve the skill sets of job seekers and coordinate the various funding sources available for workforce development.

The WIB provides oversight for workforce development activities in Ulster County, and specifically for ULSTER WORKS and the Ulster County Office of Employment and Training. Its specific mission is to meet the skill needs of Ulster County workers and employers by promoting collaboration among the economic development, education, training and job placement resources and employers.

WIA mandates that each WIB include a Youth Council to be responsible for coordinating youth workforce and job training policies. The 22 current members of the Youth Council represent such agencies as Youth Build, VESID, UC Drug Prevention, UCOET, Ulster BOCES and Family of Woodstock.

The **Ulster Works OneStop Center (ULSTER WORKS)** is a collaborative effort of local agencies which provides employment and training services to job seekers and businesses in Ulster County. Located on Ulster Avenue in Kingston, the OneStop is overseen by a consortium of the Ulster County Department of Social Services (DSS), Ulster County Office of Employment and Training, Ulster County BOCES, SUNY Ulster and New York State Department of Labor (NYS DOL). Under this collaborative effort, the OneStop provides a host of services and resources to customers seeking employment and employers seeking skilled workers. The mission of ULSTER WORKS is to provide job seekers and employers the needed assistance to create a highly skilled and qualified workforce for Ulster County. By providing job training for eligible and suitable dislocated workers, low income and otherwise disadvantaged adults and youth, ULSTER WORKS answers the needs of employers seeking a well-trained and capable workforce.

II. Significant Challenges Encountered in 2009

- Ulster County suffered significant job loss and economic slowdown from the worldwide recession. Ulster County's unemployment rate increased from 6.5% in December 2008 to 7.8% in December 2009. Newly registered OneStop customers numbered 5,025 from 7/08 through 6/09. An additional 2891 customers were registered from 7/09 through 12/09. As usually happens with these situations, resources lagged behind need for the first part of 2009.
- Though job training and upgrading of skills have increased, not enough resources were available to help the huge numbers of customers in need of skills training. Due to depleted funding, OET placed a moratorium on new skills trainings from 8/21/09 – 12/1/09; we estimate that during this timeframe approximately 250 individuals did not receive training.
- Although tasked by NYSDOL to initiate a system of Supportive Services and Needs-Based Payments under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds to pay for expenses such as books, uniforms, travel, childcare, and other expenses to support individuals in training, lack of program funds limited disbursements. Though we had budgeted up to \$21,000, the bulk of these funds were instead used to meet the increased demand for training.
- Increased numbers of clients at our offices have placed a serious demand on space requirements at the BRC. We are regularly requesting space assistance from SUNY Ulster and the Youth Bureau due to the high demand.
- Our Disabilities Program Navigator left ULSTER WORKS mid-year. A new DPN was brought on board in December 2009.
- Meeting the mandated compliance issues related to the makeup of WIB membership has been a significant challenge for our WIB. Additionally, keeping the 50% board membership of business leaders is a difficult mandate when business leaders are challenged maintaining their own operations in a difficult economic climate.

III. Significant Achievements in 2009

- Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) - altogether 305 youth aged 14-24 were employed in 114 worksites throughout Ulster County. The youth worked from July 6 through August 14, 2009, and averaged 28 hours per week @ \$8.00 per hour. Work experience positions ranged from camp counselors to maintenance aides to janitors to tutors to secretaries to videographers. The businesses that hosted the youth included for-profit, not-for-profit, and government and educational institutions.
- Occupational Training Numbers for 2009:
All Adult: (includes Adult and Adult Stimulus): 225 trained @ \$482,046. Adult Formula: 173 @ \$319,725; Adult Stimulus: 52 @ \$162,321.
All Dislocated Workers: (includes DW, DW Stimulus and Trade Adjustment Assistance): 159 trained @ \$391,591. DW Formula: 106 @ \$212,717; DW Stimulus: 35 @ \$115,504; TAA: 18 @ \$63,370.
All Youth: (includes Youth and Youth Stimulus): 28 trained @ \$36,789. Youth Formula: 24 @ \$31,886; Youth Stimulus: 4 @ \$4,903.
- In administering WIA programs, OET must meet US Department of Labor-mandated performance standards in order to avoid programmatic and monetary sanctions. For 2009, OET assured that all programs operated to meet or exceed all standards and did not suffer any loss of funding due to program performance.
- The WIB established a more rigorous committee structure in which WIB Board members are called upon to apply their leadership skills to work more directly on policy initiatives and training offerings.
- BOCES Skills Development Workshops offered at the ULSTER WORKS OneStop Center served 269 Ulster County residents who received skills development training. Topics included "How to Interview," "How to Write a Resume," "How to Search the Internet for Jobs" and "Methods by Which to Research and Apply for Civil Service Positions."
- CAREER TRAINING EXPO – In July, 2009, over 100 visitors interested in training opportunities provided by ULSTER WORKS Partners attended a Career Training Expo at the BRC and the OneStop. Eight training providers shared course and certification information. This also represented a positive press event for the One Stop on TV and in several newspapers.
- NYSDOL funding for a Gas Card Initiative that distributed \$6,250 to 124 ULSTER WORKS customers, to ease the cost of gas used to conduct job search activities and attend job training classes.
- ULSTER WORKS continued to provide business services at the ULSTER WORKS One Stop center. As part of those services, employers are provided job posting services, employee screenings, tax credit information and on-the-job training. The Ulster County Red Carpet Team, comprised of mandated and non-mandated partners of the ULSTER WORKS

- A work readiness curriculum designed to prepare youth for employment interviews was developed by members of the Youth Council and used by 100 youth in preparation for a Youth Job Fair held in Kingston in May 2009. This effort involved 16 after-school programs and agencies.
- The Youth Council of the WIB held a Youth Job Fair at the Kingston Neighborhood Youth Center on May 6, 2009. Fourteen employers interviewed over 100 youth, giving the youth interviewing experience and exposure to job opportunities within Ulster County.
- American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) provided \$34,885 in funding for two additional staff persons for OET in 2009: an Outreach Stimulus Coordinator and a Senior Account Clerk/Typist. These positions will continue until June 30, 2010 at an additional cost of \$36,815.
- Increased job training opportunities were provided with ARRA assistance to 91 trainees in the amount of \$282,570.
- 13N Green Talent Pipeline, a NYSDOL regional initiative, conducted a series of workshops in conjunction with various Ulster County school systems to expand the understanding of skill sets needed for “green” jobs. One contractor conducted three professional development webinars for Ulster County educators on sustainable energy education teaching methods. A second contractor provided Sustainability Education to 2,079 elementary and middle school students in 93 classes throughout Ulster County.
- The Disability Program Navigator provided services to 169 customers from January through June, 2009.
- The WIB brought together representatives of Ulster BOCES, SUNY Ulster and The Solar Energy Consortium to expand the Innovative Manufacturing Technology training provided by the schools. This effort provided a closer link between business needs and the training pathway provided by educators.

IV. Specific Inter-Departmental / Interagency Collaborations in 2009

- UC Office of Employment and Training collaborated with SUNY Ulster in the design, planning, implementation and delivery of an American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funded Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). This was a major effort that led to SUNY Ulster placing 134 youth at worksites throughout Ulster County. Total funds spent by SUNY Ulster in this collaboration totaled \$257,899. This was a part of the larger SYEP listed under “Achievements” above.
- In developing its work readiness credential, and planning and operating a Youth Job Fair, the Youth Council collaborated with UC Youth Bureau, Youth Build, Family of Woodstock, Inc. and the Boys and Girls Club.

- A facilitated discussion launched by the County Executive's office aimed at expanding effective collaborations of county operations at ULSTER WORKS OneStop Center was held December 15, 2009 and was led by John Twomey of the New York Association of Training and Employment Professionals (NYATEP). It proved to be a fruitful beginning for planning and strategizing with follow-up discussions continuing into 2010. Participants of this collaborative effort included: VESID, Ulster County BOCES, SUNY Ulster, UC Department of Social Services (DSS), NYSDOL, Experience Works, Community Action, Rural Opportunities as well as Department Heads from County Departments of Probation, UC Mental Health and Office for the Aging.
- ULSTER WORKS collaborated with SUNY Ulster's ARRA funded Certified Alcohol and Substance Abuse Counseling (CASAC) training program. ULSTER WORKS counselors determined program eligibility and referred over 20 individuals to SUNY Ulster for enrollment in the CASAC training.
- ULSTER WORKS OneStop and OET staff collaborated with The Solar Energy Consortium (TSEC) on Renewable Energy/High Tech Job Fair at SUNY New Paltz in February 2009. Over 300 persons attended this event.

V. Fiscal

This department receives no funding from Ulster County; we are 100% federally funded. OET did operate within the confines of our budgeted allotment for the calendar year 2009, which is comprised of the last half of OET's Program Year 2008 (1/1/09 – 6/30/09) and the first half of our Program Year 2009 (7/1/09 – 12/31/09).

Workforce Investment Act (WIA) formula funding to OET is funneled through the NYS Department of Labor from three sources: Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth. For PY 2009, the total allocation was \$1,109,159.

- ADULT funds are used to provide services to individuals ages 18 and older. When funds are limited, the Workforce Investment Act requires local areas to establish priority criteria for these funds, to target public assistance recipients and other low-income individuals for services.
- DISLOCATED WORKER funds are used to provide services to individuals who qualify as dislocated workers. There are several ways an individual may qualify as a dislocated worker, but generally it means an individual who has been laid off, is eligible for or has exhausted Unemployment Insurance benefits, and is unlikely to return to their previous industry or occupation.
- YOUTH funds are used to provide ten required program elements to low-income youth ages 14-21 (although performance requirements and directives have forced us to limit our population to older, out-of-school youth).

Adults and Dislocated Workers are generally served through the Ulster County ULSTER WORKS OneStop Job Center. Performance criteria attached to these populations relate to

employment, retention and earnings, and monitoring of the program is overseen directly by the New York State Department of Labor.

Our Youth program is operated by two entities: one is our in-house program staffed by an OET Workforce Assessor, and the other is a comprehensive program operated under contract with Family of Woodstock.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding for increased training was awarded to Ulster County in Program Year 2009 in the amount of \$1,078,463. This funding included \$359,428 for Youth for SYEP 2009.

TANF funding (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) is received by OET each summer from the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) for a Summer Youth Employment Program. The total TANF funding for SYEP 2009 was \$239,433.

NYS Department of Labor Disability Program Navigator funding is allocated to the Office of Employment and Training to provide employment services to the disabled community through the hire of a Disability Program Navigator. The amount dispersed under the DPN grant for PY 2009 was \$37,500.

Trade Adjustment Assistance funding provides training funds for those unemployed or dislocated as a result of industry moves to overseas. OET received \$63,370 from Trade Act federal sources for those workers dislocated at the following companies: Hydro Aluminum, NXP Semiconductors, JM Originals and KAZ, Inc.

NYSDOL Supplemental Funding provided \$6,250 to OET to oversee a Gas Card Initiative in 2009. This program provided 124 customers of the OneStop with gas cards to use for accessing job training, job interviews and job search initiatives.

VI. Anticipated Challenges For 2010

- WIA and Wagner-Peyser funds are subject to the availability of Federal funds. It is expected that both programs will be re-funded by Congress, but there is always some uncertainty as to the amount of funds allocated. Though OET anticipates level funding for the next few years, those funds are not nearly enough to meet the needs of the unemployed and underemployed in the current economy. Indeed, our seriously depleted training funds have already forced a training moratorium on our Adult fund source, with the DW fund source soon to follow.
- The number of customers is expected to remain at record highs. Space and resource needs are being planned for.
- Increased services at lower costs - we are challenged to bring a larger array of skills development workshops into our offices which will require staff development and training.
- Regarding the TANF-funded SYEP, Governor Patterson has announced his intention to not fund that program this summer. Such an action would be injurious to local youth who benefit from the work experience and wages earned; local agencies and businesses that

- Complete design and launch of ULSTER WORKS web site for the OneStop center.
- Effect positive outcomes from the OTDA-funded Career Pathways Grant by improving the referral process to help ensure the attainment of training and employment milestones for DSS clients.
- The continuing sluggishness of the local economy and inadequate funding levels through WIA will limit the impact the WIB can have on economic recovery.

VII. Identify Specific Goals for 2010

- Build a unified workforce system with our workforce partners and county human services departments.
- Build stronger alliances with our partners to assist us with providing customers with services, employment and skills development at the OneStop.
- Build the space capacity at the Business Resource Center to fit our agency and customer needs.
- Build our workshop and skills development offerings in the OneStop at the BRC to fit the needs of our growing customer base.
- Effect positive outcomes from the Career Pathways Grant for DSS clients to decrease the numbers on the County DSS roles and return employable people into the workforce, to build a pool of skilled, employable workers for our emerging workforce.
- Complete training of the new Disabilities Program Navigator and reestablish appropriate services to disabled customers.
- 13 N NYSDOL Green Talent Pipeline Initiative – Continue intensive planning for a second round of funding for building a skilled workforce for the “green” business sector in the Hudson Valley region. Planning is designed to lead to the development of a series of “green” economy workshops for the business community. Funding is also available for renewable energy occupational trainings for Ulster County residents. The second round will also contain a component to build a sustainable “green skills” education curriculum in the local schools.
- The WIB intends to investigate the attainment of 501(c)(3) status in order to apply for additional workforce funding opportunities, thereby increasing the resources available to meet its mission goals.
- Update our Demand Occupation List to better reflect Ulster County’s workforce training needs.

- The Youth Council will continue planning for Youth Job Fairs in 2010. Drawing on the success of last year's Youth Job Fair, the Youth Council will expand into three areas of the county - Kingston, Highland, and Saugerties.
- Continue roll-out of the ULSTER WORKS OneStop Center workshop series to provide long-term unemployed Ulster County residents with support services for debt and mortgage counseling, volunteer/networking opportunities and health services information for the uninsured.