

ON-THE-JOB TRAINING (OJT)
PROMISING AND BEST PRACTICES
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PROMISING STATE PRACTICES: Examples of practices other states are using for the On-the-Job Training National Emergency Grant or other regular OJT activities.

Retention Model: Missouri and Oregon, among other states, reimburse the OJT employer for training and supervision 90 days after the OJT ends, and only if the OJT participant is retained (i.e., unsubsidized hire). Southwest Washington worked in collaboration with Oregon to implement a Retention Model for their OJT reimbursement (Some of the OJT participants in Southwest Washington have completed their OJTs and will have passed the 90-day Retention in the next 30 days. At that time we will see the results of this innovative approach to employer reimbursements in our state.) – Washington Contact – Jordana Barclay at jbarclay@swwdc.org.

State Waivers: The majority of states using OJTs have a waiver of the 50% maximum reimbursement rate so they can offer up to 90% for small employers. This flexibility allows those writing OJTs with employers to “negotiate” based on the size of the business and the level of skill attainment sought. All states that have been awarded the OJT NEG have this waiver built into their projects.

State-Level OJT Policy: Many of the OJT NEG states also have state OJT policies and formats. Ohio contracted with John Chamberlin to design a unified approach to WIA and Trade Act including Business Outreach, contract and training plan templates. The strongest argument for a consolidated state policy and approach is to provide employers with the same information and forms regardless of the program being used to fund the OJT. One of the strongest negative comments made by employers regarding OJTs is that they are presented with numerous program representatives all with differing guidelines, forms and requirements. Often this level of confusion tends to turn employers off to what is really a win-win arrangement for all parties involved. The use of the same overall approach would also strengthen partnerships at the state and local level through a coordinated approach to the use of OJTs regardless of fund source and streamline functions such as payment of support or provision of intensive services.

Self-Referral: This strategy is controversial. The U.S. Department of Labor recommends OJT candidates be referred from a pool of individuals after careful skill assessment and screening, and that several clients be sent for interviews so the employer can choose the best applicant for the position. However, several national experts and practitioners recommend that One-Stop clients looking for work take a brief information sheet with them when they go on their job search and, where there is a good connection, ask that an OJT opportunity be brokered by the One-Stop. The majority of successful OJT NEG states are using a mix of One-Stop referral and interview and self-referral with follow-up by One-Stop staff to complete the assessment, contract with employer and develop the training plan. – Washington Contact – Dawn Karber, Spokane Workforce Development Council – dkarber@wdc.spokane.org

State and Local Business Outreach Approach: Massachusetts, Mississippi and Missouri as well as other states with OJT NEGs have taken both a state and local approach to marketing the OJT NEG. Centralized business and employer organizations have been contacted and state flyers and websites have been designed to announce the projects. Examples of flyers and posters are available at these state websites. Governors and other state officials have done public service announcements in conjunction with local organizations and mentioned the program at press opportunities.

Governor's and Legislative Funding Commitments: In Mississippi, the Governor and the Legislature made a commitment to promoting OJT as a key training tool. The Workforce Investment Act Formula, the Governor's 10% Reserve and state legislative initiatives have supported this commitment. In 2009, Mississippi used OJT to train over 5,000 workers.

Technical Assistance: Several states have contracted with Subject Matter Experts to develop their state policies and forms for OJTs and have consolidated On-the-Job Training formats for several programs. Ohio contracted with John Chamberlin who developed an OJT Manual to be used for Formula and Trade Act. Greg Newton and Associates has shared a Power Point on OJT Design and Practices that is on the OJT Toolkit website available on WorkSource3One. Most of the states that received the OJT NEG have information on their regular websites about the grants; some have separate websites with information.

National Career Readiness Certificates: Oregon is using the National Career Readiness Certificate statewide to assure employers that workers with this certificate are job ready and have the applied math, reading and other specific soft skills that surveys say employers are looking for.

Employer Surveys: Pennsylvania surveyed employers specifically as to their issues and concerns surrounding On-the-Job Training. Results were surprising in that few complained about excessive paperwork, with many employers being interested in the option to reimburse more than 50% of the wages and others noting that the economy was the reason they were not hiring, but that they would be interested in pursuing on-the-job training should the economy improve.

WASHINGTON STATE'S BEST PRACTICES: Local areas in Washington are utilizing some of the aforementioned promising practices. Southwest Washington is using the Retention Model and preliminary results should be available within the next two months. Spokane and Southwest Washington are stressing self-referral to clients who come in for Job Search Review as part of their re-employment strategies. Spokane has also conducted local employer forums and while the results are disappointing in that they note employer reticence to hire long-term unemployed, the information has assisted their Business Outreach to focus their campaign on the current skills of these workers.

Employer/Business Outreach: Integrated Business Outreach in many of Washington's WorkSource Centers is at the best practice level and has been so noted by employers and other partners. The individuals who work with employers to make the connection to OJT do a thorough review and orientation with the employers and step up to meet their recruitment needs. While larger employers are clear on the job classification and skill demands for workers, WorkSource staff have assisted medium and smaller employers in developing specific job skills, determining wage levels and helping to make the connection to the right worker for the employers

job openings. Clear and precise Training Plans and follow-up with the employee and employer are what make Washington's OJTs successful. Retooling Washington's Workforce Group #3 is developing strategies to keep Business Outreach staff informed and up-to-date and to act as brokers for employer assistance in their areas; coordinating with economic development and labor and industries as well as other partners within the WorkSource.

Quick Stop: The Quick Stop program in Southwest Washington is built around rapidly getting transitional support services to people returning to work. Job seekers who have experienced a prolonged period of unemployment have often exhausted every financial resource. Returning to work is often met with demands such as renewing certifications, obtaining necessary tools, or work appropriate attire that a job seeker cannot afford now that their unemployment has stopped due to returning to work. These transitional support services are designed to ensure a successful re-entry into the workforce and allow increased retention. – Washington Contact – Jordana Barclay, Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council – jbarclay@swwdc.org

OJT to Apprenticeship: Southwest Washington is using a new apprenticeship in weatherization with several individuals hired at a local construction firm in OJT slots. While the timeframes of this OJT will complete the certification needed for this apprenticeship, other OJTs will begin the longer-term work of being certified in other types of apprenticeship. – Washington Contact – Jordana Barclay, Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council – jbarclay@swwdc.org

DVR OJTs: Coordinated Business Outreach and case management at selected WorkSource offices is assisting disabled individuals in connecting with employers for On-the-Job opportunities. This is being piloted for six months through a contract between the Employment Security Department and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation of the Department of Social and Health Services.

Retooling Washington's Workforce: The goal of the Retooling Washington's Workforce initiative around on-the-job training is to expand and improve the use of this particular tool or approach in Washington in order to address some of the dislocation challenges of the recent recession. Because OJT has not -- with a few exceptions -- been widely used in our state for some time, the state will be offering an OJT Basics webinar to reestablish and rebuild local staff awareness and knowledge of this tool by focusing on its basic structure and requirements, sharing best practices, and point out resources.

Use of Waiver on Flexible Reimbursement: South-Central Washington is using the flexibility allowed in this grant to reimburse employers at a sliding scale starting with 90%, moving to 75% as the OJT progresses and ending at 50%. This provision has helped them gather employers to OJTs that were not initially interested. – Washington Contact – David Gonzales, South-Central Washington Workforce Development Council – david.gonzales@co.yakima.wa.us