UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

NATIONAL EMERGENCY GRANT PROMISING PRACTICES SERIES:

ESTABLISHING AND MANAGING A TEMPORARY JOBS PROGRAM

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About the National Emergency Grant Promising Practices Series

States and local areas that administer National Emergency Grants (NEGs) have developed a growing body of expertise in the effective management of these grants. The *National Emergency Grant Promising Practices Series* is a compilation of ten documents whose purpose is to highlight and share some exemplary approaches that were instrumental in preparing for, planning, and implementing a NEG. The intent of disseminating these effective methodologies on a broad, national level is to facilitate the continuous improvement of NEG project operations and to promote peer-to-peer information-sharing among practitioners.

The information presented in the *NEG Promising Practices Series* was gleaned from a study, which focused on the in-depth review of fifteen NEG projects that varied in type, size, and scope. Collectively, these projects represent an investment of $282,377,589 made by the Department of Labor (DOL) that helped states assist dislocated workers obtain reemployment in the aftermath of a large layoff or disaster-related event. The insights shared by these grantees were synthesized for dissemination, resulting in a set of promising practices that build upon four broad themes:

- *Infrastructure and Readiness.* How grantees have organized state and local delivery systems to ensure effective and efficient use of NEG resources;
- *Planning and Start-Up.* How grantees have mobilized key resources and stakeholders to facilitate effective grant planning and implementation;
- *Program Design and Implementation.* What specific interventions and services have been implemented to support the unique reemployment needs of dislocated workers; and
- *Institutional Results.* How NEG investments have directly or indirectly resulted in an enhanced capacity to respond to unexpected economic events.

Listed below are the ten documents, which comprise the *National Emergency Grant Promising Practices Series*. Each review addresses a specific area of NEG management and has been written to emphasize the specific planning, design, and operational decisions that contributed to successful retraining and reemployment strategies.

- *Working Across Boundaries in Planning a Regional NEG Response*
- *Expanding NEG Training Capacity Through Partnerships with Community Colleges*
- *Aligning NEG Strategies with High Growth Sectors and Occupations*
- *Peer Support Systems that Strengthen Outreach and Participation*
- *Preparing for the Unexpected in Disaster Grants*
- *Establishing and Managing a Temporary Jobs Program*
- *Implementing Transition Teams to Lead the Dislocation Response*
- *Partnering with Organized Labor to Support Reemployment*
- *Coordinating Resources to Meet the Reemployment Challenge*
- *Using Data Strategically to Align Job Seekers and Occupational Demand*

PREVIEW

NEG disaster projects, like other NEGs, respond to significant dislocation events. These types of grants, however, differ from other NEGs in both their precipitating cause and critical program elements. The major activity in a disaster NEG is to establish a temporary jobs program to assist with clean-up, restoration, and the provision of humanitarian aid in communities harmed by natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods, or fires. Disaster grants can also operate like other types of NEGs by combining workforce services with the temporary jobs program to support the permanent reemployment of those workers unlikely to return to their previous jobs.

The temporary jobs program that is implemented by the workforce system is the main focus of an effective disaster response, but not all regions have experience in its critical components: coordinating with disaster relief organizations and community stakeholders, selecting work sites, and hiring and supervising temporary workers. Effective practice in establishing and operating a temporary jobs program carefully focuses on all stages of the disaster NEG including.

- *Infrastructure and Readiness.* Developing policies and procedures for a temporary jobs program prior to an emergency situation allows a state and local area to more effectively implement a disaster grant. These program policies and procedures allow a NEG operator to quickly identify an employer of record, select work sites, and hire and deploy dislocated workers to provide clean-up and humanitarian assistance.

- *Planning and Start-up.* The start-up of a temporary jobs program requires coordination with public partners such as emergency management agencies, environmental agencies and local officials. This coordination supports the selection of priority work sites for clean-up or humanitarian assistance, helps to leverage resources from the community, and ensures compliance with environmental regulations.

- *Program Design and Implementation.* The design of a temporary jobs program requires comprehensive safety training and practice, efficient management and supervision, and building reemployment services into the temporary jobs program. This helps to ensure the safe delivery of clean-up and humanitarian tasks, the recruitment and retention of work crews, and supports the temporary workers who cannot return to old jobs to move into new, permanent employment.

Learning from NEG Grantees: This blueprint provides information on how four disaster NEG grantees established effective temporary jobs programs and also used those programs

to support broader reemployment objectives. Its purpose is to provide basic information to new disaster grantees on establishing a temporary jobs program and to disseminate core practices of experienced grantees to the workforce system at large.

Florida. During the hurricane season of 2004, **five significant storms** hit all regions of the State of Florida; some areas were hit more than once. The broad and recurring impacts of these hurricanes meant that it was impossible to identify what particular damage was caused by a specific storm; therefore, the State served each of these disasters through a single NEG. The immediate need after each of the Florida hurricanes was both clean-up and humanitarian assistance. NEG Award Amount: $69,266,299.

Mississippi. The impact of **hurricane Katrina** was felt in all parts of the State of Mississippi. The southern coastal counties were the hardest hit, incurring long-term damage to their economic and civic infrastructure. Mississippi initially concentrated on providing immediate humanitarian assistance through its temporary jobs program; however, it also faced the need to support longer-term reemployment goals as large numbers of workers were unable to return to their previous employment. NEG Award Amount: $95,000,000.

Pennsylvania. In 2006, seven of Pennsylvania's Local Workforce Investment Areas experienced **extensive flooding** with most of the damage being concentrated in three primarily rural regions. The State administered the grant, and funds were distributed among the workforce areas based on the extent of local damage. While the NEG supported the temporary jobs program, the local workforce areas used formula funds to augment the initiative through the provision of workforce development services. NEG Award Amount: $4,835,970.

Louisiana. The entire state of Louisiana suffered devastation from the combined impacts of **hurricanes Katrina and Rita**. Parishes closest to the Gulf experienced the most direct physical destruction while northern areas of the State were impacted by an influx of evacuees. These circumstances complicated the recruitment process as well as the establishment of participant eligibility. Louisiana began with an emphasis on clean-up and humanitarian assistance, but the long-term impacts of these hurricanes on employment created a need to provide broader workforce services as the project continued. NEG Award Amount: $73,642,093.

The temporary jobs programs implemented by each grantee are further described below. These examples of effective planning and operations can be adapted to the variety of circumstances NEG disaster grantees face. Specific practices discussed below include:

- Determining the employer of record;

- Recruiting and retaining temporary workers; and
- Selecting and overseeing worksites.

The discussion also includes a review of instances in which grantees have integrated workforce services to facilitate the transition from temporary to permanent employment.

Determining the Employer of Record

One of the most immediate tasks in establishing a disaster grant temporary jobs program is to determine who the employer of record will be. The employer of record provides the mechanism for hiring, insuring, overseeing, and paying the temporary workforce. In general, grantees based their selection of the employer of record on their perception of what will help them:

- Quickly implement a temporary jobs program;
- Fully comply with employment law and regulations;
- Control costs; and
- Meet program goals.

Grantees in Louisiana and Pennsylvania chose to use the local **Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs)** as the employer of record; Mississippi chose a single **staffing agency** that had local subcontracts; and one Florida WIB chose to use a large **local employer** as one of the employers of record in its area. This diversity of approaches serves to illustrate the range of factors that grantees have considered in identifying an employer of record that allows for the rapid and efficient start-up of a temporary jobs program in their area.

- *WIBs as Employer of Record.* In Louisiana and Pennsylvania, the local WIBs receiving disaster grant funding through their States chose to act as the employer of record. This choice was made both in anticipation of the needs of participants for permanent employment as well as to support State and local goals for systems integration. Local WIB staff believed that with the WIBs acting as the employer of record, they could more directly integrate temporary workers into the workforce system and help them make connections to permanent employment opportunities. They sought to structure the temporary employment activities as work experience that supported participants in gaining permanent employment.

  In Louisiana, the mass evacuation of some areas, especially those in and around New Orleans, caused a general shortage of workers available and eligible for temporary jobs for at least a year. Other regions had their populations double overnight. These areas had an abundance of potential workers for the temporary

employment jobs, but many individuals were also coping with the loss of their homes, communities, and, in some cases, basic identification information. In this context, workforce staff viewed temporary employment as an incremental step that provided individuals with some income and a more gradual opportunity to prepare them for new employment. The Lafayette County, Louisiana, WIB believed that the most effective method of creating an integrated and interconnected flow of support was for the WIB to take on the role of employer of record.

The Pennsylvania Tri-County Workforce Investment Board (TCWIB) hired over 400 temporary employees through their disaster NEG. This required the agency to ramp-up internal hiring processes including payroll services, insurance, and supervision of employees. They carefully documented the procedures they used in hiring and supervising staff to be prepared for potential future disasters.

Representatives of WIBs acting as the employer of record acknowledged that this role often results in additional expenses. Most notably, the organization incurs an increase in its workers compensation rates and may need to develop new procedures such as a system to make and track wage garnishments. These representatives maintained, however, that, for them, theses costs were outweighed by the benefits.

- *Staffing Agencies as Employer of Record.* The devastation of Hurricane Katrina in Mississippi created an immediate and longer-term need for large numbers of temporary workers to provide clean-up and humanitarian assistance. As an indication of the scale of this effort, the Twin Districts WIB in Hattiesburg, the hardest hit region, processed between $1.3 and $1.6 million per week in salaries at the peak of the temporary jobs program. State officials consulted with local grantees about how to determine an employer of record and found a consensus among local area representatives about the need for consistency across the State in the personnel policies and procedures related to temporary jobs. The decision was made, therefore, to use one staffing agency that could offer existing job descriptions and employment policies as well as information on occupational wage rates. In some instances, this staffing agency maintained oversight but subcontracted with a local staffing company. Representatives from the State of Mississippi felt that selection of a single responsible party allowed for more immediate implementation of the temporary jobs program and helped to maintain uniform quality of delivery across the State.

- *Local Employer as Employer of Record.* While most of its workforce areas utilized staffing agencies, Florida was unique among the disaster grantees in that one local WIB utilized a large local employer, Piper Aircraft, Inc., as the employer of

record. Piper had to shut its plant down for several months while repairing storm damage. The local WIB decided to operate a temporary jobs program and allow Piper aircraft to act as the employer of record. This decision enabled the workers to continue receiving health benefits, kept them in the region, and facilitated record-keeping since the company already had the required worker identification information. While these workers were not allowed to provide any clean-up services at their plant, they were utilized at approved public and non-profit worksites for hurricane-related disaster clean-up.

Recruiting and Retaining Temporary Workers

Recruitment begins with identifying who is eligible to be hired for a temporary jobs program. Under a disaster NEG, the priority is on serving those whose jobs were temporarily or permanently lost. Other types of dislocated workers, however, can also be eligible for temporary employment under a disaster NEG after enrolling workers directly laid off as a result of the disaster.

All of the disaster sites employed similar recruitment methods but differed slightly in the types of dislocated workers who participated. The hurricanes hitting Florida, Mississippi, and Louisiana disrupted the ability of employers to quickly resume operations. This meant that there were large numbers of directly affected dislocated workers from almost every industry and occupation available for temporary positions. Many of these workers were not able to return to previous employment. In Pennsylvania, on the other hand, most employers were not affected by the flooding for an extended time and were able to resume their operations comparatively quickly. Therefore, while recruiting was first aimed at individuals dislocated from employment by the flood, the majority of those available and eligible for temporary jobs were other types of eligible dislocated workers. Against this backdrop, several outreach plans and recruitment points were used by grantees to most efficiently identify workers that are eligible for temporary positions:

- *The Unemployment Insurance (UI) application process.* While individuals cannot simultaneously receive UI benefits and work in a temporary position, project staff in Louisiana and Mississippi found that providing information on temporary jobs to individuals seeking to sign up for unemployment benefits was an effective outreach method. Given the large numbers of jobs lost and the accompanying need for income, interest in the temporary jobs also grew rapidly by word of mouth. The temporary opportunities that provided more income than unemployment benefits attracted candidates with a variety of employment backgrounds. These included service workers in the coastal economy and professional workers from leading employers such as Keesler Air Force Base, Northrop Grumman, and Chevron.

- *Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Disaster Sites.* Workforce Escarosa Inc., a local WIB in the Florida panhandle, utilized FEMA Disaster Sites for worker recruitment. Within two days of the storm, staff members were on site at all FEMA locations. As they signed workers up for unemployment, they simultaneously provided them with an application for a temporary job as an alternative to collecting benefits. This co-location with FEMA provided individuals with a firsthand look at an aggressive emergency response to the disaster and may have motivated them to apply for the temporary jobs to help their community.

- *One-Stop Career Centers.* The Pennsylvania sites utilized their One-Stop Career Centers (CareerLink) for recruitment, intake, and enrollment. Recruitment efforts were made through advertising on the CareerLink Web site as well as through public service announcements in the local newspapers, radio stations, and television stations. In the Tri-County workforce area the number of individuals who applied for the temporary worker positions was so great that CareerLink time-stamped the applications to determine who had signed up the earliest.

While turnover of workers can be a problem in temporary jobs programs, the grantees described in this blueprint developed methods of maintaining needed workforces. In some cases, this partly reflected the size of the disaster; for instance, one Mississippi workforce staff member observed that there was minimal turnover in the temporary positions for the first six months since there were limited permanent employment opportunities. Several other themes also emerged:

- *Integrating reemployment assistance into the temporary jobs program.* Staff indicated that some of the workers were motivated to remain with a temporary jobs program because it was designed to also help them pursue future employment. Integration of reemployment assistance is described in more detail in a later section of this blueprint.

- *Careful monitoring of wage limits.* In the larger disasters that require longer-term cleanup, the wage limits established for an individual temporary worker can be quickly met. By carefully monitoring when workers were about to reach wage limits, project staff were able to prepare workers for their next steps and to identify the need for renewed recruitment efforts.

- *Providing necessary training.* The Pennsylvania sites with crews working in intemperate weather and with potentially dangerous tools (e.g., chainsaws) sternly emphasized safety at their worksites and monitored this carefully. All temporary workers were required to go through safety training prior to being

assigned to a worksite. Each element of the safety training provided a certificate. For the crew leaders, this included a Red Cross certification for the first aid training and a certificate for a two-day chainsaw safety course. All of the temporary workers received a certificate from the OSHA training. Additionally, the crews got daily safety talks from site supervisors and the TCWIB had a safety officer on staff who made daily unannounced safety inspections to work locations. Ultimately, this level of training and certification enhanced the job stability among temporary workers and supported their future employability.

- *Ensuring the visibility of good work.* The NEG grantees indicated that the positive response to the value and importance of the community work that was done strengthened the morale and commitment of the temporary workers. For instance, in Pennsylvania local residents voluntarily provided coffee and donuts to the crews to thank them for their work. The crews received recognition from state representatives and municipalities as well as positive stories in local newspapers. One WIB Director indicated that the recruitment of crew members became easier as the project continued partly because of how well it was received in the community.

Worksite Selection

Temporary work funded under disaster NEGs can generally only be performed at public and private non-profit worksites. As such, it requires that grantees have the capacity to work collaboratively with other community stakeholders to identify worksites are addressing the most pressing local needs. Grantees also developed strong monitoring systems to ensure the sites complied with existing regulations. Several factors influenced the selection of worksites across these disaster grantees:

- *Locally set priorities.* In the Pennsylvania disaster NEG, the flooding damage was severe but was generally restricted to public lands with lesser impact on private employers. The Tri-County Workforce Investment Board (TCWIB) began its worksite selection by conducting meetings with county commissioners and each county's emergency management department. TCWIB let the county commissioners set the priority of where the temporary workers would commence clean-up activities. Within the counties, WIB staff organized

> *"One promising practice was that we removed as much of the paperwork as possible in what we asked of them. We wanted their input [on worksites] but didn't need 5 pages of paperwork. The main question was: where was the greatest need for clean-up by temporary workers."*
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> *– Frank Thompson, WIB Director, Northern Tier Pennsylvania*

meetings of townships and boroughs seeking input on clean-up priorities. Once sites were selected, the WIB staff required the commissioners to sign a worksite agreement describing the tasks that would be undertaken and the responsibilities of each entity.

- *Provision of humanitarian aid.* In Louisiana, the enormous devastation caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita strained the infrastructure so severely in some regions that the temporary jobs were first utilized for providing humanitarian aid in areas receiving evacuees rather than the locations where most of the damage occurred. The Lafayette WIB was the first region to start its temporary jobs program, and the worksites were primarily located at non-profits and local government offices where evacuees were employed to help other evacuees. Similarly, in Mississippi the primary emphasis in selecting worksites was on the provision of essential humanitarian services by working in shelters to help FEMA and the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) centers.

- *Support for emergency clean-up.* In all disaster grant areas, public sector responsibilities grew dramatically with the need for cleaning up debris on public property including roads, parks, and beaches. These worksites and temporary job responsibilities were broadly coordinated with FEMA and its state counterparts that had major responsibilities for the more intensive clean-up and restoration tasks. In general, the NEG-funded temporary jobs required only the use of hand tools (e.g., rakes, chainsaws) while FEMA handled tasks requiring the use of heavy equipment (e.g., backhoes, cherry pickers). NEG-funded temporary workers also supported municipalities with such tasks as recovering soaked records and library books and providing teachers' aides and school counselors.

Overseeing Worksites

Grantees described numerous lessons learned surrounding the oversight of worksites.

- *Worksite supervision.* While all of the grantees utilized WIB staff to oversee and manage the worksites, they also needed to select crew leaders for on-site supervision. The Pennsylvania, TCWIB selected its crew leaders based on a review of the temporary workers' prior experiences as well as observation and interview. TCWIB staff offered a two-day orientation where temporary workers completed paperwork, attended an eight-hour Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) training, and participated in the required drug-free workplace and sexual harassment training. After this orientation, WIB staff members interviewed potential crew leaders to determine both abilities and interest in the position. Those selected as crew leaders received instructions on

the necessary paperwork and participated in Red Cross first-aid and chainsaw training. Additionally, each crew leader was provided with laminated copies of the worksite policies that he/she kept with him/her for reference during the clean-up activities. Crew leaders also participated in meetings with WIB staff members during off-work periods such as rain days. These meetings were used for problem solving, additional training, and planning.

- *Worksite monitoring.* Each grantee established detailed policies for monitoring worksites. The Workforce Escarosa Florida WIB developed worksite job orders asking each site to justify the hurricane-related impact and the jobs duties requested. The job orders also listed a pay rate, which was verified by the staffing agencies as being in line with wages for similar positions. Every three months, the sites would have to justify that the temporary work tasks continued to be hurricane-related. The WIB kept a "firewall" between worksite monitors and program staff to ensure objectivity as monitors reviewed sites for compliance with regulations and safety procedures.

  In Pennsylvania, the TCWIB had a Quality Assurance Team conduct weekly visits of the flood crew at each worksite. During these visits the team completed a monitoring form that included a review of: the Worksite Agreement, client eligibility determination and documentation folder, site crew leader interview notes, and crew member surveys. The reports were submitted to the Quality Assurance Officer who reviewed them and identified any needs for corrective action. If corrective action was deemed necessary, the report was given to the Executive Director of the WIB. A monthly report was submitted summarizing the number of monitoring visits that were made.

- *Environmental issues.* Coordination between clean-up and environmental regulations is critical for NEG disaster grantees. For example, at one Pennsylvania worksite, work was stopped for a day when a crew member identified a potential beaver dam. The workers knew that beavers were endangered within the region and, therefore, knew that they needed to call an environmental official. Additionally, in the Northern Tier the Department of Environmental Protection, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation were observers as the county offices of Emergency Management and Conservation District selected and prioritized worksites. This allowed representatives from these agencies to raise any environmental issues or challenges related to potential worksites.

Providing Workforce Services to Temporary Workers

While their overriding emphasis was on supporting local recovery through temporary jobs programs, the disaster grantees provided a range of broader workforce services. The discussion below focuses on the workforce services directly connected to the temporary jobs programs. It is important to note, however, that grantees provided various career services to temporary workers to assist them in finding permanent employment.

In an earlier Pennsylvania disaster project, the local areas focused primarily on immediate clean-up needs and then turned their attention to helping temporary workers find more permanent employment. In contrast, this program was designed to provide career planning assistance *throughout* the duration of the program. The NEG jobs were temporary and some were filled with individuals who previously had had great difficulty connecting to permanent employment.

During the clean-up activities, program staff sought to proactively connect local employers and temporary workers by bringing them in to observe worksites or meet with workers at CareerLink. These employers talked to the crew members employed in temporary jobs and invited them to apply for open positions at their companies. The WIB Director acted as a reference and wrote letters of recommendation for crew members listing the tasks they were responsible for and noting qualities such as good attendance or the ability to listen to instructions. The WIB contracted for on-the-job training for some of the temporary workers once clean-up was completed.

Additionally temporary workers visited a local CareerLink Center to receive counseling and attend computer literacy classes or job search workshops. The temporary workers engaged in these career development activities on their own time time. Local workforce areas utilized formula funds to support these reemployment services.

In many cases, the jobs formerly held by the temporary workers in Louisiana and Mississippi never reemerged. Louisiana and Florida structured their temporary jobs programs so that each worker was required to spend some time outside of paid work learning job search and interviewing skills. Some of the One-Stop Career Centers in each of these states were damaged and therefore provided these

How to Structure a Temporary Jobs Program to Support Reemployment

- *Connect temporary workers and local employers.*
- *Implement structured skill building modules as needed (e.g., safety, equipment use)*
- *Use temporary worksites to refine job readiness or "soft" skills.*
- *Use any available time (e.g., like rain days) to provide workforce services.*

services at mobile units that had been purchased or borrowed for use during emergencies. Additionally, some temporary workers who were unable to return to their previous employers were able to enroll in training. Most of the local WIBs co-enrolled NEG participants in the WIA Dislocated Worker program to provide this training.

Reemployment Through NEG Promising Practices

The effective planning and implementation of a **temporary jobs program** in the aftermath of a natural disaster is critical in promoting the reemployment of dislocated workers. Sound planning decisions around the structure and operation of the temporary jobs programs allows for rapid and efficient start-up, which translates into an immediate flow of income to those needing work. At the same time, careful selection of temporary worksites engages a broader range of stakeholders while providing the greatest opportunity to address community needs through the work program. In addition to expediting clean-up and humanitarian aid, a well-conceived temporary jobs program provides an opportunity to transition workers to permanent employment opportunities.

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