JUL 24 2014

Dear Governor:

We are encouraged by the consistent pace of job gains and strong evidence of economic recovery. Despite recent employment growth, too many individuals are out of work for too long, some individuals who do have a job are having difficulty advancing, and many businesses are faced with a shortage of workers with the right skills applying for the jobs that they want to fill. Our Federally funded job training and education programs play an important role in bridging gaps between the current skills in the workforce and those needed for available jobs. To help more Americans acquire the skills they need to find a pathway into middle class jobs, we continue to work with a sense of urgency to improve the Federal training and education system and begin implementation of the new Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act.

Taking the first step to ensure that Federal training and education program resources are effectively aligned to help workers advance and enable businesses to hire skilled workers, the Vice President of the United States, together with our Departments, has carried out a Government-wide review of Federal job training and education programs. This review led to the development of a job-driven checklist to apply strategies for job-driven training consistently across Federal programs. The checklist consists of seven elements that were identified from evidence-based and promising practices for strengthening the workforce to meet the needs of employers and connecting workers with good jobs. Each Federal agency has used the checklist to review its competitive and formula job training grants and related programs, and identified initial steps they will take to better integrate the elements in the checklist into their competitive and formula grants. We will also be incorporating the experience of the review into our thinking and planning as we work with the states and localities on implementing the new law.

To the maximum extent possible, elements of the checklist will be incorporated into our competitive grant programs in the coming year, and we hope that this sparks training programs across the country to become more job-driven. Each of our Departments is prioritizing the promotion and implementation of the job-driven training elements in other ways.

For example, a central job-driven training element is employer engagement; the Departments of Labor and Education will begin working with employer-led workforce investment boards and other stakeholders to identify an approach to measuring business engagement. Measuring business engagement and taking steps to improve business services will increase satisfaction among business customers and help workforce investment boards to develop training programs that better serve job seekers. The Department of Commerce is integrating the job-driven checklist into its new guidelines for Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies that are

developed by regional economic development organizations. The Department of Education will leverage its grants to train vocational rehabilitation counselors, encouraging universities to offer courses that help counselors develop better relationships with employers.

Additionally, in an effort to help states and localities better link and coordinate education and training services in ways that enable workers to attain industry-recognized credentials, and ultimately, employment, the Departments of Education, Labor, and Health and Human Services have joined together around a common definition and framework of career pathways. A national meeting will be convened this September to further inform strategic technical assistance and investments that encourage public-private partnerships to expand state-level career pathways.

Together, we believe these seven elements support a more integrated, effective, and job-driven workforce and training system and work in conjunction with the vision of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act to promote and invest in effective training and education opportunities. We recognize that many states, local areas, and tribal communities already implement training strategies that reflect many or all of these elements. We applaud those efforts and your future actions to continue to drive what works. We strongly encourage you to use the attached checklist when implementing workforce and training programs in your state, and hope that reviewing this checklist can spark some new ideas and approaches to implementing job-driven programs.

As a valued partner in efforts to help Americans secure a place in the middle class, we ask for your continued leadership in supporting a job-driven approach to training. Moving forward, we will continue to strengthen the role of these job-driven elements in the Federal workforce and training system. To support you in implementing the job-driven checklist, our agencies will be issuing guidance shortly that will include suggestions on how to increase the presence of these elements in the design and delivery of programming. We look forward to working with you and other state partners to advance a job-driven training approach that expands job opportunities for every American.

Sincerely,

Thomas E. Perez
Secretary of Labor

Penny Pritzker
Secretary of Commerce

Sylvia M. Burwell
Secretary of Health and Human Services

Arne Duncan
Secretary of Education

Enclosure: Job-Driven Training Checklist

CHECKLIST FOR JOB-DRIVEN TRAINING

☑ Work up-front with employers to determine local or regional hiring needs and design training programs that are responsive to those needs

Engaging employers, employer associations, and labor organizations in the design and delivery of education and training can help ensure that such programs meet current and future hiring needs and will likely result in employment for participating job seekers.

Concrete examples include:

- Providing industry with a leadership role, for example through an employer-led workforce investment board or other coordinating board, such as an industry association, to set strategic direction and to help coordinate and connect programs and program activities.
- Engaging business and industry to identify skills, define skills and competencies, design programs, and develop curriculum.
    - May take the form of consulting directly with businesses or with associations or other intermediaries (possibly organized by sector) that have the active involvement of businesses and expertise in training.
- Securing employer commitments that will add value to the program, such as:
    - Providing work-based learning opportunities—for example, through on-the-job training or Registered Apprenticeships.
    - Providing up-to-date, accessible equipment and technology as well as the instructors to help participants with various learning styles master the required new skills.
    - Making commitments to hire graduates from training programs.
- Collaborating with employers and credentialing agencies in developing industry-recognized credentials and validating their labor market value.

☑ Offer work-based learning opportunities with employers—including on-the-job training, internships, and pre-apprenticeships and Registered Apprenticeship as training paths to employment

Work-based learning enables participants to gain or enhance their skills while employed or while engaged in an experience that is similar to employment. Work-based learning can result in workers getting hired and earning a salary more quickly while receiving support for ongoing educational and career advancement.

Concrete examples include:

- Internships (paid) or other summer or year-round employment opportunities, and paid work experience.
- On-the-job training, which is training conducted by an employer and occurs while an individual is engaged in productive work.

- Registered Apprenticeships (possibly combined with pre-apprenticeships), which are "earn while you learn" training models that combine job-related technical instruction with structured on-the-job learning experiences.
- Job shadowing experiences, which may occur even prior to training to ensure that the nature of the work and the work environment are a good fit for the prospective trainee.
- Incumbent worker programs, particularly those that provide training for current low-skilled or low-wage employees that give them access to more advanced positions.
- Transitional jobs, which provide short-term work experience along with appropriate supportive services for hard-to-employ individuals.
- Career academies, a school-within-a-high school model with strong employer partnerships that integrate academics with an occupational curriculum.

☑ **Make better use of data to drive accountability, inform what programs are offered and what is taught, and offer user-friendly information for job seekers to choose what programs and pathways work for them and are likely to result in a job**

Timely, reliable, and readily accessible labor market information, in conjunction with program outcomes, should be used to inform the focus of programs and to guide jobseekers in choosing the types of employment or fields of study, training, and credentials to pursue. Labor market information includes current and projected local, regional, State, and national labor markets, such as the number and types of available jobs, future demand, job characteristics, and training and skills requirements, and the composition, characteristics, and skills of the labor supply.

Concrete examples include:

- Using job openings and employment projections data to strategically identify employer partners.
- Using job openings, projections, and wage data to tailor job training offerings.
- Using labor market projections and characteristics of regional labor market or program participants to conduct skill gap analyses.
- Providing information about current and projected job openings and wages to participants to inform their decisions about which programs to enter.
- Informing small or medium-sized businesses about industry and occupational trends and wages.

☑ **Measure and evaluate employment and earnings outcomes**

Programs should measure employment and earnings outcomes and make sure they are easily understood by prospective participants, employers, and other current or potential stakeholders.

Concrete examples include:

- Providing outcome data for Federal programs to the public. For example, Department of Labor programs use a set of common employment-related measures, which include

employment rates, earnings, and retention, and make the aggregate results available on the Department's website.

- Making Federal performance data on education and training programs by provider publicly available to individuals and employers.
- Presenting data on outcomes by training provider to individuals as they review training options with career counselors.
- Using real-time data to continuously improve program outcomes.
- Evaluating a program to determine whether it is effective.

Promote a seamless progression from one educational stepping stone to another, and across work-based training and education, so individuals' efforts result in progress

Training programs should be part of a continuum of education and training leading to credential attainment, good jobs, increased earnings, and career advancement.

Concrete examples include:

- Implementing programs that fit on "career pathways" with a clear sequence of education and training that result in skills and credentials aligned with the needs of the industry sector, with multiple entry and exit points leading to good jobs and meaningful careers.
- Aligning the program with and leveraging other public (Federal, State, or local) or private education and training program resources.
- Integrating foundational skills education and training with occupational skills training, with an emphasis on contextualized learning.
- Creating articulation agreements among high schools, community and technical colleges, and four year colleges, so that students can continue a program of study seamlessly.
- Providing sector-specific training to high school students, either on-site or through an employer, coupled where possible with college credits from the local community college.
- Enabling Registered Apprenticeship graduates to receive college credit for prior learning during the apprenticeship program.

Break down barriers to accessing job-driven training and hiring for any American who is willing to work, including access to supportive services and relevant guidance

Programs should include career assistance and supportive services, consistent with the program's governing statute and appropriations authority, as needed to enable an individual to participate in and complete education and training activities and secure employment.

Concrete examples include:

- Career counseling and job coaching.
- Transportation to/from training or work-based learning.
- Assistance with finding and affording quality child care or family care.
- Housing assistance.

- Providing people with disabilities with information on assistance services that are available to help them contribute in the workplace (e.g., readers for individuals who have low vision or are blind; interpreters for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing; note-takers for individuals with mobility disabilities, etc.).
- Workplace flexibility strategies (time, place, tasks) for individuals with multiple barriers to employment, including individuals with disabilities.
- Supported employment programs for individuals with significant disabilities.
- Other supportive services, including food assistance, services that help participants have criminal records expunged, and substance abuse and mental health treatment.

☑ **Create regional collaborations among American Job Centers, education institutions, labor, and nonprofits**

Effective programs often leverage a variety of resources, both financial and in-kind, from other partners to deliver the best services possible and to expand the reach of those services to address needs of both individuals and employers. This can be particularly valuable for programs that serve individuals with multiple barriers to employment. To avoid duplication of effort and identify potential sources of such leverage, training programs should consider partnerships with or within the public workforce system (including the American Job Centers—formerly known as One-Stop Career Centers—and State and local Workforce Investment Boards), vocational rehabilitation agencies, human services agencies, higher education institutions, veterans service organizations, labor organizations, philanthropic organizations, business-related and other non-profit organizations, and community- and faith-based organizations. Any partnership and leveraging of funds must be consistent with the program's governing statute and appropriations authority.

Concrete examples include:

- Seeking input from an advisory or governing board made up of representatives from these entities that informs and makes decisions about training and training-related programs.
- Identifying public and private funds or resources that can, where permissible, support the delivery of the program, including staff to coordinate with partnership organizations.
- Coordinating wrap-around and supportive services for participants with other resources from public and privately-funded training, training-related, or social and community services programs.
- Aligning the program with other public and private education and training program resources.