

Outcome Goal 4.1 – Equip Workers to Adapt to the Competitive Challenges of the 21st Century

The 21st Century has created new challenges and opportunities for American workers. To better prepare the Federal workforce system for the effects of globalization, changing demographics, and advances in technology, the Department has included a new strategic goal in the Strategic Plan that covers this report – *A Competitive Workforce*. This outcome goal supports the new strategic goal by employing strategies that target assistance to American workers by helping them acquire the skills they need to obtain good jobs as quickly as possible. This in turn helps American businesses acquire competitive advantages needed to innovate, grow, and succeed in an increasingly global economy.

Through this goal, DOL programs:

- Train knowledge workers for jobs of the new economy;
- Keep pace with new skill requirements driven by technology and global workforce demands;
- Utilize the diversity of the American workforce; and
- Anticipate human capital solutions for employer needs, including our high-growth industries.

DOL's Revised Final FY 2004 Annual Performance Plan (dated January 27, 2004) included three performance goals in support of this outcome goal: 4.1A – Analyze information collection and research programs for relevance; 4.1B – Address worker shortages; and 4.1C – Build a demand-driven workforce system. All three are associated with programs administered by ETA. Since all but a few of the programs are forward-funded,²⁷ performance measurement lags funding and the first year's results will be reported in the DOL FY 2005 Performance and Accountability Report.

Strategies aimed at supporting the Department's goal include: improved communication and collaboration among businesses, workers, and training providers; new partnerships with employers in high-growth industries; strategic initiatives with other government agencies; leveraging of private investments in training; and outreach to underutilized labor pools. The discussion below summarizes progress to date in shifting emphasis of employment and training programs toward matching undersupplied businesses with underutilized workers and focusing on skills needed to keep American labor competitive.

Results Summary

DOL undertook a number of foundation building activities that will inform future strategies. These activities have helped us to better understand potential emerging workforce issues, where worker shortages exist and how to tap into underutilized labor pools, and the necessary components of building a demand-driven workforce system. Highlighted below are some of DOL's programs, research projects, and electronic tools that support Goal 4:

- *The President's High Growth Job Training Initiative* (HGJTI) is a strategic effort to prepare workers to take advantage of new job opportunities in high-growth sectors of the American economy. Through executive forums with leaders of expanding industries, critical workforce gaps and issues are identified. In PY 2003, ETA funded 30 High Growth Job Training Initiative pilot and demonstration grant projects totaling \$48.7 million in the following industry areas: advanced manufacturing, biotechnology and health care.
- *America's Career InfoNet*²⁸ offers dynamic labor market-based information for career decisions. The website provides access to National, State and local labor market trends, occupational employment and outlook and wages, licensing requirements, and information on occupational skills and abilities. This information can help workforce staff identify high growth industries and understand their occupational staffing patterns and requirements.
- *Career Voyages Web Site* promotes high demand occupations to youth. This site uses ETA's labor market information products such as short and long term employment projections, O*NET skills information and State gathered data in an interactive Internet website.

²⁷ A mechanism of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) that allows for distribution of grant monies prior to measuring outcomes. WIA programs operate on a July-June Program Year (PY). For example, PY 2004 began on July 1, 2004 and ends on June 30, 2005.

²⁸ <http://www.acinet.org/acinet/>

- ETA launched the *Hispanic Initiative* this year to help Hispanic Americans exploit job opportunities in high growth sectors via special grant projects that define effective strategies.
- *The Asian-American Initiative* is a study of Asian-American and Pacific Islander (API) workers that will illuminate the demographic and economic characteristics of that diverse population and provide a better understanding of the key employment issues facing the most vulnerable API subpopulations.
- *The ETA Management Information and Longitudinal Evaluation (EMILE)* reporting system streamlines 12 ETA program reporting systems into one comprehensive reporting structure that will allow for consistent, comparable analysis across ETA funded employment and training programs. Reports will capture critical information on individual job seekers as well as business customers served through the federal workforce investment system to better match the needs of both groups.
- ETA's Business Relations Group created the *Partnerships for Jobs Initiative* to assist business in utilizing the services of the publicly funded workforce system. The BRG collaborates with each national business partner to craft an implementation strategy.
- *The O*NET System* rates the importance and level of over 200 occupational requirements including Knowledge, Skills, Abilities (KSAs), Tasks, Generalized and Detailed Work Activities, and Work Context. Organizations that are seeking to close the skills gap can turn to O*NET OnLine (<http://online.onetcenter.org>) to quickly view a profile of the skill requirements of high-growth, in-demand occupations. ETA also has documented community college use of O*NET information in the development of competency-based curricula.

Future Challenges

DOL's FY 2005 Performance and Accountability Report will mark the first expected results for investments made in support of Goal 4 – over \$70 million for the High Growth Job Training Initiative (HGJTI) Grants awarded in PY 2004. The Department expects to report on the following indicators:

- Number of industries engaged;
- Number and amount of funded demonstration projects;
- Number of Executive Forums and number of attendees; and
- Number of Workforce Solutions Forums and number of attendees.

For PY 2005, the Department has requested \$250 million for the Community Based Job Training Grants.