

**RAILROAD RETIREMENT BOARD**



**AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT OF 2009**



**Extended Unemployment Benefits  
Program Plan**

Prepared by Office of Programs  
May 2009

**RAILROAD RETIREMENT BOARD  
Program-Specific Recovery Plan**

**Program Title:**    **Extended Unemployment Benefits**

**CFDA #:**           **57.001 Social Insurance for Railroad Workers**

**I. OBJECTIVES**

**Program Purpose:**

The Recovery Act provides an appropriation of \$20 million to be used for payment of additional extended unemployment benefits under the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act. The new law provides the temporary extended benefits to employees receiving normal unemployment benefits for days between July 1, 2008, and June 30, 2009.

**Public Benefits:**

The Recovery Act is an unprecedented effort to jumpstart our economy, in part by providing economic relief to those who are in the greatest need, including individuals who have been unemployed for an extended period. These additional unemployment benefits are available to eligible individuals without any restrictions, to be used in whatever way the claimant deems best. To be eligible for unemployment benefits, a claimant must be unemployed, be ready, willing and able to work, and be available for work. Eligibility for special extended unemployment benefits is determined based on the legal requirements outlined in the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act and the RRB's regulations for unemployment benefits.

**II. PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES**

The Extended Unemployment Benefits program is a single project which involves the identification of entitled individuals, the release of notices and claims to those individuals, and payments made for eligible claims. The Railroad Retirement Board has been apportioned \$20 million to pay these extended benefits and \$80,000 for related administrative expenses.

**III. CHARACTERISTICS**

**Type of Financial Award to be Used:**

Extended Unemployment Benefits are "Direct Payments with Unrestricted Use" according to the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA).

**Type of Beneficiary:**

Recipients of the Extended Unemployment Benefits will be unemployed individuals. Specifically, the payments will be issued to railroad workers who previously were not eligible for extended unemployment benefits of up to 65 days because they did not have 10 years of railroad service (120 cumulative service months). Also, railroad workers

who have 10 years of railroad service, and who were previously eligible for extended unemployment benefits of up to 65 days, may now be eligible for an additional 65 days of extended benefits for a total of up to 130 days.

#### **IV. MAJOR PLANNED PROGRAM MILESTONES**

##### **Schedule with Milestones:**

The following are the major milestones planned to implement the Extended Unemployment Benefits program:

Milestone 1: April 24, 2009, Issue advance notices to claimants who may be entitled to extended unemployment benefits. Notices will be sent out weekly as additional individuals exhaust their unemployment benefits and may become entitled to the extended benefits.

Milestone 2: June 30, 2009, Begin issuing claims and/or payments to individuals eligible for extended unemployment benefits.

Milestone 3: December 31, 2009, Latest starting date for an extended unemployment benefit period under the Recovery Act.

#### **V. MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

The RRB will track all Extended Unemployment Benefits to ensure that funds provided specifically for this purpose under the Recovery Act are kept separate from other agency funding. Specific Treasury Appropriation Fund Symbols have been established for this express purpose. In addition, the RRB is using its existing cost accounting system which is integrated with the agency's financial system to track administrative expenses specifically related to the Extended Unemployment Benefits.

The principal risks involved with this program are related to keeping all financial transactions separate from the existing "regular" benefit payment systems and not exceeding the \$20 million dollar appropriation as directed in the Recovery Act. These risks are being mitigated through extensive re-programming of daily unemployment systems, which will be well-documented and thoroughly tested.

To ensure that the \$20 million is not exceeded, we will closely monitor the amount of payments being made on a daily basis, as well as any returned payments or erroneous payments. Once we determine the \$20 million available for these benefits has been exhausted or as of the ending date of the program (whichever comes first), we will post a public notice on our website that the program has ended and will deny any further claims filed for special extended benefits.

## VI. MEASURES

This program is related to a pre-existing PART program, and is subject to pre-existing PART measures. The two measures that are meaningful for the Extended Unemployment Benefits include:

- Payment Accuracy – Unemployment Insurance. Target: 99.25% paid accurately. (This is consistent with the FY 2009 target for the regular Unemployment Insurance Program.)
- Timeliness of Unemployment [and Sickness] Insurance Payments. Target: 99.8% of claims to be paid within 10 days of receipt of claim. (This is consistent with the FY 2009 target for the regular Unemployment Insurance Program.)

Each of these will be measured through existing measurement systems.

SES Official responsible for achieving the goals: Dorothy Isherwood, Director of Programs

## VII. TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The RRB provides more detailed information about the Extended Unemployment Benefits on its website at <http://www.rrb.gov/recovery/default.asp>. The public can find Frequently Asked Questions dealing with detailed eligibility criteria, information on the taxability of these payments, and how to claim benefits. In addition, the site links to RRB's Recovery Act press releases and to other agencies that are involved in the Recovery Act. Finally, the site includes a link to the RRB Office of Inspector General website, where information can be found regarding the OIG's oversight related to RRB's Recovery Act responsibilities.

The RRB has designated the Director of Programs as the Senior Accountable Official for the ERP program. She and her staff work closely with other agency senior officials, including the Chief Financial Officer, the Chief Information Officer, the Director of Administration, and the General Counsel to oversee all aspects of the project. These aspects include program/policy development and coordination of benefits, new procedures, financial and cost accounting, legal opinions and advice, and release of information to the public. All of these senior officials are members of the agency's Executive Committee, which is responsible for agency operations overall, and which reports to the head of the agency (the three-member Board).