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WORKFORCE 101 HANDBOOK FOR EMPLOYERS

A Guide to Oklahoma's Workforce System

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Introduction

Oklahoma's public workforce development system, known as "Oklahoma Works," strives to ensure Oklahoma employers have access to the skilled talent they need to grow. At the same time we help workers get the in-demand skills they need to succeed in a high-tech world. That means working diligently to ensure our statewide, federally-sponsored employment and training system is comprehensive and responsive to the needs of employers, job seekers, and state and regional economies.

Oklahoma Works' network of comprehensive programs and services supports businesses in expanding, training, and restructuring your workforce.

How to Use the Workforce Handbook

This workforce handbook is organized in sections that guide you through services that:

Expand Your Workforce. This section explains how employers can find and hire qualified workers, even in a tight labor market. You will learn how to team with state and local service providers to recruit workers who may be getting laid off and match them to your need for skilled workers. In addition, you can access untapped populations that are looking for jobs including youth, veterans and persons with disabilities. Labor market information is also readily available at the national, state and local level.

Train Your Workforce. This section shows how various types of training such as on-the-job and apprenticeship training will upgrade your employees' skills to maintain and improve your business's productivity and save you money by training current employees rather than hiring new ones. Available training options are described so you can assist your employees in accessing the training they need.

Restructure Your Workforce. This section details several strategies and programs that are available to you if your business is experiencing downsizing, restructuring or closings. Information on preventing and managing a layoff or closing is provided including assistance available to you and your employees so you can access services immediately, become familiar with the legal requirements during a layoff situation and provide your employees assistance in making the transition to a new job.

Finance Your Workforce. This section provides you with information on using available tax credits. The Workforce Glossary also assists you in deciphering the many terms you may encounter in your search for workforce information.

Getting Started

The programs and services that are described in this handbook have all been developed in your community with the valuable input of many of your fellow employers. As a part of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, employers have a key role in guiding and monitoring the workforce system in every state and local area. Employers comprise a majority of the Local Workforce Boards that are set up in your community to oversee the local system of programs that serves you, your employees and your community.

As an employer, you are able to participate in the continuous improvement of the workforce development system and help to shape the future for the health and growth of your community through your State and Local Workforce Boards. Use www.oklahomaworks.gov to find the Local Workforce Development Board or Oklahoma Works American Job Center nearest you to speak with a local Business Services Representative about how you can get involved.

Recruiting Skilled Employees

Employers are challenged to find qualified, available workers. Oklahoma Works American Job Centers offer convenient, no-cost resources available in your local community and online.

ONE-STOP Shopping for Qualified Employees

The local Oklahoma Works American Job Center is where workers and employers connect. The center provides job search and skills training services for workers. The Business Services Representatives provide worker training and recruitment services to employers. Oklahoma Works American Job Centers can make the match between workers who need jobs and companies that need employees.

The Oklahoma Works American Job Centers will:

- Coordinate the initial communication between you and the pool of qualified workers in your area as well as outside your area
- Offer pre-screening of workers so you know you are getting skilled applicants
- Provide you access to detailed labor market information (LMI) in your state and local area as well as nationally
- Connect with your local Business Services Representative by contacting the local Workforce Board at <https://oklahomaworks.gov/local-workforce-development-boards/>
- Where to Go for Assistance — To find your nearest Oklahoma Works American Job Center, visit <https://oklahomaworks.gov/about/oklahoma-works-centers/>

One-Stop Service Online and Mobile App

Oklahoma utilizes an online system, known as OKJobMatch, which makes it easy for job seekers to find jobs and for employers to find candidates. Unlike most job posting services, it is free for employers to use OKJobMatch.

Through OKJobMatch, <https://okjobmatch.com/>, you can:

- Post job listings
- Search over 45,000 active resumes
- Reach hundreds of workers who access OKJobMatch daily
- Link to local Oklahoma Works American Job Centers to find qualified candidates
- OKJobMatch also has a mobile app, with the same data, that many job seekers use

OKJobMatch provides immediate one-stop access to skilled workers who are looking for jobs just like the one you are offering. It is one of the fastest ways to find workers.

Where to Go for Assistance —

- Go to <https://okjobmatch.com/> to create and access your OKJobMatch account
- Connect with your local Business Services Representative by contacting the local Workforce Board at <https://oklahomaworks.gov/local-workforce-development-boards/>
- Contact your local Oklahoma Works American Job Center for additional information at <https://oklahomaworks.gov/about/oklahoma-works-centers/>

Oklahoma State Regents Digital Toolkit for Employers

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) is the state's coordinating board for public higher education. The Oklahoma state system of higher education is comprised of 25 colleges and universities, including two research universities, 10 regional universities, 12 community colleges and one public liberal arts university. The OSRHE is building a digital toolkit for employers that features business services offered by Oklahoma's public higher education institutions and a variety of resources for your workforce. The digital toolkit will help employers:

- Contact leadership at our colleges and universities to consider partnership opportunities.
- Create an employer profile on Handshake to connect with campus career services to assist in recruiting graduates in your field or industry.
- Review workforce projection data for Oklahoma's critical occupations.
- Search our online database of campus-based employer services.
- Complete our Tuition Assistance Benefit survey to be featured on the State Regents' website.
- Learn more about State Regents' programs such as UpskillOK (micro-credentials), Reach Higher (adult learners) and Show What You Know (credit for prior learning experiences).
- Access information to help your workforce prepare, plan and pay for college.

The Digital Toolkit for Employers will be available on [the Economic Development section of our website](#).

Hiring Workers from Untapped Sources

Oklahoma Works American Job Centers help you access workers who have been trained in the skills that are in demand in your local labor market. When you use the Oklahoma Works American Job Center, you will find qualified workers, many of whom are available from sources you may not have tapped.

We link jobseekers to training and reemployment services to prepare a variety of workers to succeed in today's workplace. In addition to traditional hiring sources, Oklahoma Works American Job Centers put you in touch with prepared workers who represent:

- Veterans
- Laid-Off Workers
- Justice Involved
- Youth
- Persons with Disabilities
- Skills-Based Hiring

Veterans

American veterans are an excellent source of qualified talent. Many of them have been through rigorous military training — everything from computers and logistics to mechanics and cooking skills. You can find these skilled workers through your local Oklahoma Works American Job Centers. You can also access resources on the Hire a Veteran page at the U.S. Department of Labor.

These resources include information and access to:

- An employer toolkit for hiring veterans
- Key skills and attributes of transitioning military personnel
- Comparability of military and civilian training
- Veterans and eligible spouses are given priority over non-covered persons for the receipt of employment, training, and placement services provided under a qualified job training program

Veterans have solid training through their military experience and are receiving the skills they need to transition into civilian careers

Where to Go for Assistance —

- Go to <https://www.dol.gov/veterans/hireaveteran/> for more information on how you can find veteran workers
- Contact your local Oklahoma Works American Job Center about hiring veterans at <https://oklahomaworks.gov/about/oklahoma-works-centers/>

Laid-Off Workers

Laid-off workers, often called dislocated workers, are a pool of experienced workers, many of whom have the skills your business needs. Oklahoma Works American Job Centers serve workers who have been laid off, often due to business closures or a reduction in force, by assisting them to find new jobs or learn new skills through training to move into a different career. By connecting with your local Oklahoma Works American Job Center, you can tap into a qualified source of job applicants that are pre-screened and ready for you to interview. Many of these laid-off workers will have received:

- Skills assessments
- In-Demand Skills Training
- Resume and interview skills training
- Local labor market information

Through these services, Oklahoma Works American Job Center staff helps you reach these qualified and ready-to-work applicants for your business.

Where to Go for Assistance —

- Contact your Local Business Services Representative through your Local Workforce Board <https://oklahomaworks.gov/local-workforce-development-boards/>
- Contact your local Oklahoma Works American Job Center for additional information at <https://oklahomaworks.gov/about/oklahoma-works-centers/>

Justice Involved

Many ex-offenders are released back into their communities every year and are seeking jobs, stability, and a chance to prove themselves. Many have received specialized work related training while they were incarcerated, but most struggle to find employment after their release. The biggest single factor leading to another incarceration is unemployment.

The Federal Bonding Program (FBP) has enabled ex-offenders and many other groups of people* to successfully transition back into the world of work. It provides an individual fidelity bond to employers for job applicants who have a barrier to employment. It protects the employer in case of any loss of money or property for which the employee is responsible. There are no out-of-pocket expenses to the employer or applicant because the bonds are obtained and provided by the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission and have no deductible.

**Other groups of people who may benefit from this program are: People with a history of substance abuse, TANF recipients or others who utilize public assistance, people with poor credit or work histories, those who have received a dishonorable discharge or anyone who cannot gain employment because of not being commercially bondable by the employer for theft, larceny, forgery or embezzlement.*

Where to Go for Assistance —

- To get help contact your Local Business Services Representative through your Local Workforce Board <https://oklahomaworks.gov/local-workforce-development-boards/>
- Contact your local Oklahoma Works American Job Center about the Federal Bonding Program at <https://oklahomaworks.gov/about/oklahoma-works-centers/>

- Oklahoma’s Federal Bonding Unit website with contact information <https://oklahoma.gov/oesc/individuals/programs/federal-bonding.html>
- Review the Federal Bonding Program website <https://bonds4jobs.com/>

Youth

Young people are eager to apply their skills in the workplace and enthusiastic about learning new workplace skills. Oklahoma Works American Job Centers can connect you to youth (ages 14-24) looking to learn new skills and enter the workforce. Employers can hire trained youth for part-time or summer jobs or provide work-based learning opportunities, like apprenticeships, internships and On-the-Job Training, which lead to stable job paths and careers.

Oklahoma Works has several initiatives that provide academic and occupational training for youth and connections to employers with labor needs. These initiatives include:

- Youth Programs (https://www.doleta.gov/youth_services/). Oklahoma Works American Job Centers provide youth ages 14-24 opportunities for work experience and training through youth programs that include a variety of options for improving their preparation for education, skills training, and employment opportunities.
- Job Corps (<https://www.jobcorps.gov/>). Job Corps is a voluntary program that prepares young people ages 16–24 with education and hands-on career training for entry-level positions that lead to careers in today’s job market. Students receive hands-on experience through work-based learning programs, internships, and job shadowing. Job Corps graduates have experience working in teams and know what it takes to be successful on the job. Through the program, they develop a strong work ethic and are eager to succeed. Job Corps can help you save time, save money, and increase productivity.
- YouthBuild (https://www.doleta.gov/youth_services/youthbuild.cfm). The YouthBuild program prepares workers for good jobs and promotes the attainment of skills and knowledge necessary for success in a knowledge-based economy. YouthBuild specifically serves at-risk youth, ages 16-24, who are current or former high school dropouts with the greatest challenges to finding good jobs. Key features of the YouthBuild model include:
 - Education (high school diploma or state-recognized equivalent)
 - Occupational skills training (industry-recognized credentials in construction or other in-demand industries)
 - Leadership development
 - Innovative alternative education programs
 - Individualized and project-based instruction

Where to Go for Assistance —

- For more information about Oklahoma Job Corps programs, go to:
 - Guthrie Job Corps: <https://guthrie.jobcorps.gov/>
 - Talking Leaves Job Corps (Tahlequah): <https://talkingleaves.jobcorps.gov/>
 - Tulsa Job Corps: <https://tulsa.jobcorps.gov/>
- For more information about Oklahoma YouthBuild, go to:
 - YouthBuild at CDSA in Enid, OK: <http://www.cdsoak.org/yb.html>.
- Contact your local Oklahoma Works American Job Center about Youth Programs in your community at <https://oklahomaworks.gov/about/oklahoma-works-centers/>.

Persons with Disabilities

Many Oklahoma employers are saving time and money by recruiting qualified employees with disabilities. Employers can reduce turnover by hiring qualified, job-ready applicants who receive pre-employment testing and job-related training to ensure skills are matched to the job requirements. On-the-job training can be customized to fit your needs and follow-up services are provided to ensure employees' success on the job.

An Oklahoma study shows more than 84 percent of individuals served through Oklahoma's Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired programs are still working after two years. If you want to save time and money, hire and retain capable, well-prepared employees and build a diverse workforce, we can help you, free of charge.

Where to Go for Assistance —

- Go to <https://oklahoma.gov/okdrs/employers/bsp.html> for more information on the benefits and assistance available when hiring a person with disabilities.
- Call OKDRS at 1-833-653-7748
- Contact your local Oklahoma Works American Job Center about hiring persons with disabilities in your community at <https://oklahomaworks.gov/about/oklahoma-works-centers/>.

Skills-Based Hiring

Employers often struggle to find the talent with the right skills to meet hiring needs and grow their organization. This means positions go unfilled for longer periods of time. We work with employers to make data-informed decisions about traditional recruiting, screening, and hiring methods that result in a limited hiring pool. Implementing skills-based practices focused on the skills needed to perform job duties expands the number of qualified applicants and results in less time to hire and increased retention.

Classes on Skillful are taught by your Local Business Services Representative.

Where to Go for Assistance —

- To learn about skills-based job posting, hiring and management, contact your local Workforce Board Business Services Representative at <https://oklahomaworks.gov/local-workforce-development-boards/>
- Review more on skills-based practices: <https://oklahomaworks.gov/skills-based-practices/>
- Check out skills-based practices at Skillful: <https://www.skillful.com/employers>
- Create a skills-based job posting at: <https://generator.skillful.com/>

Understanding Your Local Labor Market

Current and accurate information is important to managing your business. Through Oklahoma Works you get the up-to-date labor market information you need to evaluate the talent pool from which you recruit and plan for your future workforce needs.

Oklahoma Works offers state and regional labor market information, population statistics, and economic data that provide a profile of the labor markets and local economies where you do business. You can view the current dynamics of your local labor market by visiting <https://oklahomaworks.gov/workforce-briefings/>. The following provides a list of organizations that provide economic and labor market information.

Accessing Economic and Occupational Data

Understanding the overall climate of the economy and labor market where you operate will assist you in planning for your workforce needs. Information such as industry trends, unemployment rates and occupational projections can inform workforce recruiting plans and human resources programs that will create incentives for workers to stay and grow with your company. The following organizations provide relevant labor market information useful for businesses:

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) is an independent national statistical agency that collects, processes, analyzes and disseminates essential statistical data. The Bureau of Labor Statistics provides access to data and information including, but not limited to:

- Employment and unemployment statistics
- Compensation and working conditions
- Prices and living conditions
- Productivity and employment projections

The Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) is another independent national statistical agency that collects, processes, analyzes and disseminates essential statistical data. The Bureau of Economic Analysis provides access to data and information including, but not limited to:

- Employment statistics
- Income and Savings
- Prices and Inflation
- Gross Domestic Product

Where to Go for Assistance —

- Go to www.bls.gov to access up-to-date labor market information and the Occupational Outlook Handbook
- Go to www.bea.gov to access up-to-date economic and labor market information
- Visit <https://okcommerce.gov/data/> to access other data and research products
- Contact your local Oklahoma Works American Job Center about labor market information at <https://oklahomaworks.gov/about/oklahoma-works-centers/>
- Connect with your local Business Services Representative by contacting the local Workforce Board at <https://oklahomaworks.gov/local-workforce-development-boards/>

Accessing Other Labor Market Information

O*NET Online is the nation's primary source of occupational information. O*NET is a comprehensive resource of information about jobs and occupations, containing hundreds of standardized and occupation-specific descriptors on almost 1,000 occupations covering the entire U.S. economy. The database, which is available to the public at no cost, is continually updated from input by a broad range of workers in each occupation. It integrates a database with a common language for describing jobs and skills descriptions to create a tool that is useful to businesses. You and your human resources staff will be able to use this information to:

- Develop concise job descriptions.
- Refine recruitment and training goals.
- Develop better job descriptions to target more qualified workers.
- Define success factors for promotion and advancement.

Where to Go for Assistance —

- Go to <https://onetonline.org> to access up-to-date occupational information.

Oklahoma's Critical Occupations

Where to Go for Assistance — The List

- Go to <https://oklahomaworks.gov/criticaloccupations> to see the list

Critical Occupations Methodology and Parameters

The top 100 Critical Occupation List is focused on job growth in the future and acknowledging the need for extended timeframes to achieve higher levels of education. This list identifies occupations that are in high demand and are projected to have positive future growth.

The methodology for selecting occupations for inclusion in the Top 100 Critical Occupation List is designed to emphasize the state's desire to meet labor demands so that businesses can prosper and Oklahoma citizens can maintain wealth-generating occupations. Factors in the selection process demonstrate the values of job growth, wealth generation, and education, and are outlined below.

1. Data on all occupations in Oklahoma was pulled from **Lightcast** (economicmodeling.com). All available data was exported, which included years 2001-2028.
2. The statistical software program STATA was used to compute data. Steps to identify growing occupations are outlined as follows.
 - Three statistics were calculated. First, the total percent change in number of jobs was calculated for each year to the next. Then, an average percent change was calculated based on all years. Second, the past rate of change was calculated for the years 2009 to 2019. Third, the forecasted rate of change was calculated for the years 2019 to 2028.
 - After calculating the above statistics, all occupations with less than zero growth were removed.
 - Remaining occupations were checked to assure they were at least .05% of the total jobs in Oklahoma based on total jobs in 2019.
3. The list developed from Step 2 was filtered on additional factors.
 - Sustainable Wages: Jobs with a median hourly earnings below \$15 were removed.
 - Education: Jobs with no formal education with a median wage below \$20 were removed from the list.
 - Economic Growth: Jobs that do not foster long term economic growth were systematically removed.
4. Total number of projected jobs for 2025 were pulled for remaining occupations. The occupations were sorted by total number of jobs in 2025. The top 100 occupations were identified.

Improving the Skills of Your Workforce

Where is your industry moving? Do your employees or potential employees have the skills needed to help you grow and adapt? Oklahoma Works has resources available to train your current workforce, sometimes with funding provided to either you or your employees directly.

Training Your Current Workforce

Most businesses express the same need to have available skilled talent required for growth. Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) is a type of work-based training and upskilling designed to ensure employees of a company can acquire the skills necessary to retain employment and advance within the company, or to acquire the skills necessary to avert a layoff. From frontline workers to professional and management staff, the demand for training increases as industries and companies expand.

Incumbent Worker Training is an available resource to help employers train their current workforce to:

- Meet the needs of all sizes of companies
- Help avert potential layoffs of employees
- Increase the skill levels of employees so they can be promoted within the company and create backfill opportunities for the employers
- Build a better system to support employer investments in training
- Become skilled at using upgrades in processing equipment

Where to Go for Assistance —

- Connect with your local Business Services Representative by contacting the local Workforce Board at <https://oklahomaworks.gov/local-workforce-development-boards/>
- Go to www.oklahomaworks.gov/businessservices/ for more information on how you may be able to access incumbent worker training

Training Through Apprenticeships and Work-Based Learning

Work-based learning, including apprenticeships and internships, offer Oklahomans the opportunity to earn a wage while learning in-demand, professional skills. Apprenticeships and internships also benefit employers by providing the opportunity to develop their ideal workforce and train for the specific skills they need.

Registered Apprenticeships (RA) are a proven solution that helps a business grow a workforce of well-qualified, highly skilled workers. Combining on-the job learning with classroom instruction, RA programs are designed by and for the employer and customized to their needs. Registered Apprenticeships are an employer-driven, earn-while-you-learn model that provides an apprentice the opportunity to be mentored by a highly skilled employee, creating knowledge transfer from one generation of workers to the next.

Registered apprenticeship programs allow employers to play a more active role in shaping the talent they need while building a culture of ongoing learning and innovation. Programs recognized by the U.S. Department of Labor can access benefits including federal resources and funding. Oklahoma Works assists organizations to meet registration standards. Nationally, and across industry, employers with RA programs see a return on investment of \$1.47 for every \$1.00 invested.

RA programs help build a qualified, educated workforce, while providing training and financial stability for workers. Working together, businesses, workers and apprenticeship programs help stabilize our labor force and boost Oklahoma's economy.

Where to Go for Assistance —

- Go to <https://oklahomaworks.gov/work-based-learning/> for more information on the different forms of work-based learning

- Go to <https://www.apprenticeshipsok.com/> for more information about how you can set up an apprenticeship or internship in your company
- Contact the Oklahoma Works apprenticeship staff at wbl@okcommerce.gov
- Connect with your local Business Services Representative by contacting the local Workforce Board at <https://oklahomaworks.gov/local-workforce-development-boards/>

Sector Partnerships

Employers frequently struggle to find the skilled workers needed to sustain and grow their businesses. These shortages are not typically isolated to one employer, but span an entire industry sector. Industry-led, community-supported partnerships that strengthen regional economies and connect people to jobs are one solution to such challenges.

Sector Partnerships bring together businesses from the same industry and in a shared labor market region. These employers work with education, workforce development, economic development and community organizations to address the workforce and other competitiveness needs of a targeted industry. Sector partnerships can help facilitate the advancement of workers at all skill levels, including the least skilled. Sector partnerships:

- Influence training programs and expand the pool of talent with needed skills.
- Create a pipeline of future workers.
- Align and maximize resources and services to increase efficiency sustainability of strategies to close workforce skill gaps.
- Make systems more responsive to the needs of business.
- Build lasting relationships between and provide an ongoing feedback loop with education, training and workforce programs.
- Help employers fill jobs more quickly.
- Increase retention, productivity, and placements for in-demand occupations.

Businesses from any industry can form a sector partnership. All you need is an organization or company to volunteer to convene C-suite business leaders within an industry who share a common need. The agenda is defined by business leaders, addressing the specific issues that matter most to their industry in their region. Sector Partnerships focus on issues that no single company can fully tackle on its own and that require a collaborative approach.

Where to Go for Assistance —

- <https://oklahomaworks.gov/sector-partnerships/>
- Connect with your local Business Services Representative by contacting the local Workforce Board at <https://oklahomaworks.gov/local-workforce-development-boards/>

UpskillOK: Career Focused Credentials

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) is developing a statewide framework for the development of micro-credentials, alternative learning pathways directly aligned with high-demand skills requested by employers. Micro-credentials help individuals adapt and succeed, equipping both students pursuing a degree and current degree-holders with specific career skillsets, competencies and knowledge that can be readily transferred to fill critical workforce needs. Through the UpskillOK initiative, employers and businesses can: become an internship or apprenticeship site; work with colleges and universities to build skills-based digital badges and micro-credentials that meet hiring needs; let colleges and universities know which industry-

recognized credentials you value most; and endorse a developed micro-credential. In addition to customized micro-credentials, colleges and universities across the state are participating in a system contract with Coursera, one of the largest online learning platforms in the world, to provide students, faculty and staff, and employers' access to Coursera's comprehensive catalog of thousands of job-relevant courses at a significantly reduced cost. For more information on micro-credentials, visit www.upskillok.org.

Reach Higher: Oklahoma's Adult Degree Completion Initiative

Over 402,000,000 Oklahomans currently have earned some college credit, but stopped out before earning a college degree. Reach Higher, the Oklahoma state system of higher education's adult degree completion initiative, provides specialized advising and support systems to help adult students return and complete degrees that lead to employment in Oklahoma's critical occupations. Through Reach Higher's FlexFinish and DirectComplete programs, 22 institutions offer flexible class options and enrollment to meet the needs of working adults pursuing a Reach Higher associate or bachelor's degree. More than 10,000 degrees have been awarded through Reach Higher since the initiative's inception in 2007. For more information on the Reach Higher initiative, visit www.reachhigherok.org.

Managing Major Changes in Your Workforce

Even in a robust economy, you may need to engage in layoffs, downsizings and restructuring in order to adjust to changing technology and industry fluctuations. Oklahoma Works provides assistance to both employers and workers to manage these changes and lessen the impact on your employees and community.

Rapid Response — Finding Help for You and Your Employees

If you are reducing the size of your workforce, changing its skill mix or anticipating a business closure, merger, or buyout, Rapid Response services can help you meet your business needs while recognizing the needs of your employees and community. Our team of seasoned Rapid Response professionals across the state are prepared to assist employers and employees during these transitions. The Rapid Response team is sensitive to your concerns such as confidentiality, maintaining productivity and transitioning your employees to new jobs, new careers or training for new skills.

The Rapid Response team will provide:

- An initial employer meeting to plan transition services for your employees
- Possible options to reduce or avoid the layoff
- Workshops focused on existing services made available to your employees before they leave your employment
- Coordination with outplacement services you may have hired
- Access to Oklahoma Works American Job Center services your employees need

Where to Go for Assistance —

- Connect with your local Business Services Representative by contacting the local Workforce Board at <https://oklahomaworks.gov/local-workforce-development-boards/>
- Go to <https://oklahomaworks.gov/find-a-job/rapid-response/> to learn more, access Oklahoma's Rapid Response Tools and Resources Handbook, and view the Rapid Response Video Series

Understanding the Responsibilities and Requirements of a Large Layoff

In general, if you are a business that employs at least 100 full-time workers you may be required by the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act (WARN) to provide 60 days written notice in advance of plant closings and mass layoffs if you:

- Close a facility of 50 or more workers;
- Discontinue an operating unit of 50 or more workers;
- Lay off 50 to 499 workers, and these layoffs constitute 33% of the total work force at a single employment site; or
- Lay off 500 or more workers at a single employment site.

In such cases, you must notify each worker being laid off, the employee's union representative (if applicable), the Oklahoma Works State Rapid Response Coordinator and the chief elected official of the unit of local government where the closing is occurring. This notice is the action that often triggers Rapid Response services. Although your business may be exempt from WARN, we encourage you to give workers sufficient notice, to the extent possible.

Where to Go for Assistance —

- Connect with your local Business Services Representative by contacting the local Workforce Board at <https://oklahomaworks.gov/local-workforce-development-boards/>
- Go to www.oklahomaworks.gov/find-a-job/rapid-response to learn more about Oklahoma's Rapid Response services
- Check out https://www.doleta.gov/layoff/warn/eta_default.cfm for detailed information on WARN

Financial Assistance for Your Employees

You can help your employees during a layoff to make the transition to new jobs or training by providing them information on income support assistance available to them.

- Unemployment Insurance (UI) at <https://ui.ok.gov/>. The UI program pays benefits to eligible workers who are unemployed and meet state requirements. Also known as unemployment compensation, UI can help to preserve the economic health of communities by maintaining the purchasing power of these workers
- Trade Readjustment Benefits at <https://oklahoma.gov/oesc/individuals/programs/taa.html>. Employees who have experienced reduced hours and wages due to increased imports, or lost their job due to foreign competition or because the business moved overseas, may be eligible for benefits under the Trade Adjustment Assistance Act
- Health Benefit Options. Under what is often known as COBRA (the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act), your employees and their families may be able to purchase extended health coverage up to 18 months after a layoff
- Pension Benefits Options. Employees who have been laid off and were active participants in your company's pension plan may be eligible to roll over vested pension benefits to an Individual Retirement Account (IRA)
- Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA). Laid-off employees may be eligible for DUA if they lose their job or have a significant interruption of work during a disaster as declared by the President of the United States and are not entitled to unemployment insurance. The employees who are able to use this program must meet certain state criteria

Where to Go for Assistance —

- Connect with your local Business Services Representative by contacting the local Workforce Board at <https://oklahomaworks.gov/local-workforce-development-boards/>
- Contact your local Oklahoma Works American Job Center at <https://oklahomaworks.gov/about/oklahoma-works-centers/>

Training Assistance for Your Employees

As employers are demanding a more highly skilled workforce, many workers want to improve their skills to make them more marketable and valuable to employers. These workers want to make more money, have job security and feel valued as a knowledgeable employee. However, training and higher education costs money that not all companies offer.

In addition to Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) mentioned above, Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) can be thought of as a voucher to pay for training for a high-demand career, and are available to adult workers, including those who are unemployed or who are receiving a low wage. Through Oklahoma Works American Job Centers, they can choose from a list of high-performing eligible training providers and make informed career choices using ITAs to pay for their training.

Your business will benefit from ITAs because they help to build a larger pool of skilled workers to recruit to meet workforce demand.

Where to Go for Assistance —

- Connect with your local Business Services Representative by contacting the local Workforce Board at <https://oklahomaworks.gov/local-workforce-development-boards/>
- Contact your local Oklahoma Works American Job Center about Individual Training Accounts and how they work at <https://oklahomaworks.gov/about/oklahoma-works-centers/>.

Understanding Trade Impacted Workforce

If you are laying off workers due to import competition or because of a shift in production overseas, individualized assistance may be available at no cost to help your employees under the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program. You may even file a TAA petition on behalf of your employees with the U.S. Department of Labor who may certify them for benefits beyond those normally available under regular Unemployment Insurance.

Trade Adjustment Assistance

The Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program is a federal program that provides aid to workers who lose their jobs or whose hours of work and wages are reduced as a result of increased imports or the shift of work overseas. In order for workers to be eligible for TAA benefits, a petition must be submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). Certification of a petition by DOL entitles affected workers to a number of benefits, including occupational skills training while receiving income support, a wage subsidy for qualified workers age 50 and older who return to fulltime employment, assistance with job search and job relocation costs, and the Health Care Tax Credit (HCTC).

Where to Go for Assistance —

- Go to <https://www.doleta.gov/tradeact/> to file a petition
- Go to <https://oklahoma.gov/oesc/individuals/programs/taa.html> to learn more about Trade Adjustment Assistance
- Contact your local Oklahoma Works American Job Center at <https://oklahomaworks.gov/about/oklahoma-works-centers/>

Utilizing Employer Tax Credits

Work Opportunity Tax Credit

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is a Federal tax credit available to employers for hiring individuals from certain [targeted groups](#) who have consistently faced significant barriers to employment.

WOTC joins other workforce programs that incentivize workplace diversity and facilitate access to good jobs for American workers.

The Consolidated Appropriation Act, 2021 (Section 113 of Division EE P.L. 116-260) authorized the extension of the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) until December 31, 2025.

Employers can claim 25% of the qualified first-year wages up to \$6,000 for employees working, at least 120 hours but less than 400. For employees working a least 400 hours or more, the credit is calculated at the rate of 40% of the qualified first-year wages up to \$6,000. This allows a maximum credit of \$2,400. The Long Term Family Assistance recipient is calculated at 40% of the qualified first-year wages up to \$10,000 and 50% of qualified second-year wages, maximum savings \$9,000. For the Summer Youth target group, the credit is calculated at a rate of 25% of the qualified first-year wages up to \$3,000. For the disabled veteran and long term unemployed Veterans, the maximum qualifying wages range from \$12,000 to \$24,000

WOTC target groups who may qualify:

- Unemployed Veterans (including disabled veterans)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Recipients
- Food Stamp (SNAP) Recipients
- Designated Community Residents (living in Empowerment Zones or Rural Renewal Counties)
- Vocational Rehabilitation Referred Individuals
- Ex-Felons
- Supplemental Security Income Recipients
- Qualified Long-Term Unemployed
- Summer Youth Employees (living in Empowerment Zones or Rural Renewal County)

Where to Go for Assistance —

- For more information on the WOTC
<https://oklahoma.gov/oesc/individuals/programs/wotc.html>
<https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/work-opportunity-tax-credit>
https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ETA/wotc/pdfs/WOTC_Quick_Reference_Guide_for_Employers.pdf
- Connect with your local Business Services Representative by contacting the local Workforce Board at <https://oklahomaworks.gov/local-workforce-development-boards/>
- Contact your local Oklahoma Works American Job Center at <https://oklahomaworks.gov/about/oklahoma-works-centers/>

Tax Credits for Hiring Persons with Disabilities

Employers can save money by taking advantage of tax and reimbursement benefits for hiring workers with disabilities, such as:

- The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) reviewed above, allows those who qualify to receive tax credits for part of wages paid to targeted workers with disabilities, including individuals referred by

the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) divisions of Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

- Architectural/Transportation Barrier Removal Tax Deduction; Businesses can take this deduction for making their facilities or transportation vehicles accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. See Chapter 7 in IRS Publication 535 (Business Expenses). To download the form follow this link, www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p535.pdf.
- Disabled Access Tax Credit for Small Business This tax credit covers some or all of the costs an eligible small business incurs to provide access to persons with disabilities. The expenses must enable the small business to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). IRS Form 8826 has instructions on how to take this credit. To download this form follow this link www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f8826.pdf.
- DRS reimburses businesses for on-the-job training they provide to referred workers.

Where to Go for Assistance —

- Access <https://oklahoma.gov/okdrs/employers/bsp.html#Benefits> for more information on these benefits
- Connect with your local Business Services Representative by contacting the local Workforce Board at <https://oklahomaworks.gov/local-workforce-development-boards/>
- Contact your local Oklahoma Works American Job Center at <https://oklahomaworks.gov/about/oklahoma-works-centers/>

Your Workforce Glossary

ADA – Americans with Disabilities Act

The ADA expands equal employment opportunity and full inclusion for people with disabilities. Through its work to implement the ADA, the Department of Justice is breaking down barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities.

Adult Worker

An adult worker is age 18 and over and is eligible for employment and training services. Priority for certain services are given to recipients of public assistance and other low-income individuals.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. Employers with 15 or more employees and state and local government employment practices are covered. State and local governments are also prohibited from discriminating against individuals with disabilities when providing programs, activities or services. In addition, the ADA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in places privately operated and of public accommodation, including all hotels, restaurants, retail stores, places of recreation and in transportation services.

Apprenticeship Training

Apprenticeship is a combination of on-the-job training and related classroom instruction in which workers learn the practical and theoretical aspects of a highly skilled occupation. Apprenticeship programs are sponsored by individual employers, employer associations and joint labor and management partnerships.

Business Services Representative

A representative of a Local Workforce Development Board dedicated to help businesses with their workforce.

Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)

The Bureau of Labor Statistics measures labor market activity, working conditions, price changes, and productivity in the U.S. economy to support public and private decision making.

Davis Bacon Act

The Davis-Bacon and Related Acts apply to contractors and subcontractors performing on federally funded or assisted contracts in excess of \$2,000 for the construction, alteration, or repair (including painting and decorating) of public buildings or public works. Davis-Bacon Act and Related Act contractors and subcontractors must pay their laborers and mechanics employed under the contract no less than the locally prevailing wages and fringe benefits for corresponding work on similar projects in the area.

Dislocated Worker

A dislocated worker is an adult who has been permanently laid off or has received a notice of termination or layoff from employment due to no fault of their own.

EEOC – Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is responsible for enforcing federal laws that make it illegal to discriminate against a job applicant or an employee because of the person's race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, transgender status, and sexual orientation), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information.

Most employers with at least 15 employees are covered by EEOC laws (20 employees in age discrimination cases). Most labor unions and employment agencies are also covered.

The laws apply to all types of work situations, including hiring, firing, promotions, harassment, training, wages, and benefits.

Federal Bonding Program

A Federal bond is an insurance policy that protects employers in case of loss of money or property due to employee dishonesty. Bond coverage is provided for any person whose background usually leads employers to question their honesty such as ex-offenders, ex-addicts, poor credit records, dishonorably discharged from military service or persons from low-income families lacking sufficient work history.

Governor's Council for Workforce and Economic Development (GCWED)

The Governor's Council is the State Workforce Development Board (GCWED) in accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). It assists the Governor as an advisory body in the development, recommendation, implementation, and impact assessment of wealth-generating policies and programs within the workforce system and consistent with WIOA State Plan and the functions of the State Workforce Development Board as required by WIOA. The Council is led by a private sector business majority but consists of a diverse public/private membership that represent various regions of Oklahoma, including urban, rural, and suburban areas. The GCWED has oversight on funding, program and workforce system governance, policy and capacity building for the State-level WIOA Partners and Local Workforce Development Boards and partnerships.

IWT - Incumbent Worker Training

Incumbent Worker Training is designed to increase the competitiveness of your business by developing a highly skilled workforce that will result in increased financial viability, stability, competitiveness, and productivity.

Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is the leading source of free, expert, and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues. Working toward practical solutions that benefit both employer and employee, JAN helps people with disabilities enhance their employability, and shows employers how to capitalize on the value and talent that people with disabilities add to the workplace.

Job Corps

Job Corps is the nation's largest and most comprehensive residential education and job training program for at-risk youth, ages 16 through 24. Since 1964, the program has provided disadvantaged young people with the integrated academic, vocational, and social skills training they need to gain independence and get quality, long-term jobs or further their education. Oklahoma has three regional Job Corps locations.

Key Contacts

Apprentices - <https://www.apprenticeshipsok.com/businesses>

Business Services - <https://oklahomaworks.gov/businessservices/>

Local Boards - <https://oklahomaworks.gov/local-workforce-development-boards/>

Local Offices - <https://oklahomaworks.gov/businessservices/>

Skills Based Hiring - <https://oklahomaworks.gov/skills-based-practices/>

Labor Market Information (LMI)

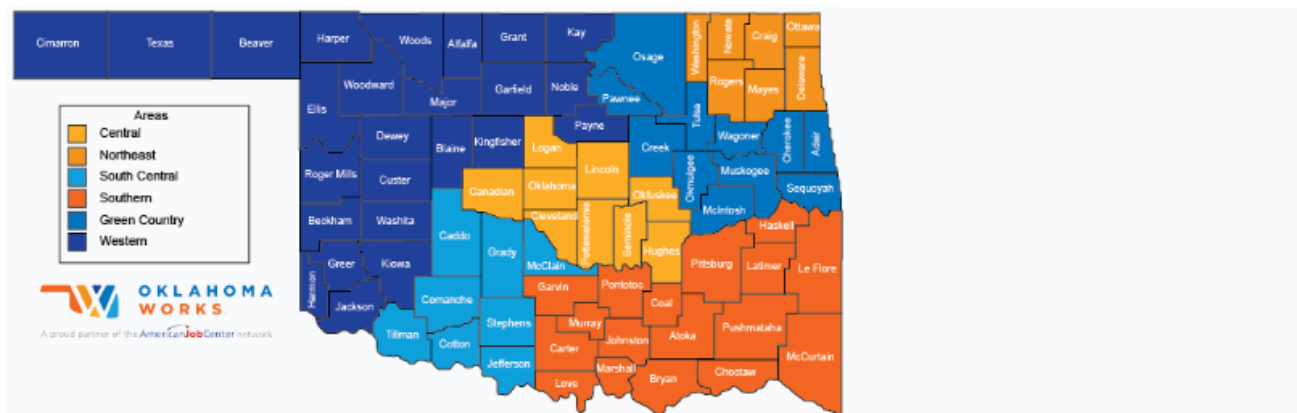
Labor market information provides statistics on occupational trends, unemployment rates and other economic statistics. Labor Market Information is available through your Local Workforce Boards' Business Services Department.

Local Workforce Development Boards

Oklahoma has six Local Workforce Development Boards that make up the state's public workforce system. These boards:

- Link Oklahomans with workforce services and resources to develop the talent of the workforce
- Operate in partnership with other providers the local Oklahoma Works American Job Centers
- Develop regional strategic plans and set funding priorities for their area
- Provide analysis of labor market information to develop strategies that focus resources for their area

Local Workforce Development Boards are business led and have a membership that is more than 50% private business. In addition, Local Workforce Development Boards are required to have representation from local community colleges, other training providers, plus elected officials.



OKDRS - Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services

The Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) expands opportunities for employment, independent life and economic self-sufficiency by helping Oklahomans with disabilities bridge barriers to success in the workplace, school and at home.

OKJobMatch



An app and online program to match available job openings with skilled workers. <https://okjobmatch.com/>

Oklahoma Works American Job Center

A One-Stop Center, also called an Oklahoma Works American Job Center, provides employers and workers with access and resources to obtain employment and training services at a single neighborhood location.

Older Worker

Older workers are people that are 55 years old or over. Those who have low-incomes may receive services such as government subsidized jobs and assistance in finding job opportunities in the private sector.

One-Stop Center

A One-Stop Center, also called an Oklahoma Works American Job Center, provides employers and workers with access and resources to obtain employment and training services at a single neighborhood location.

Rapid Response

Rapid Response is the program that provides early intervention services designed to respond to plant closures, layoffs caused by disasters, and layoffs of more than 25 employees before the layoff actually occurs. Rapid Response helps to transition workers into new jobs or training opportunities. Rapid Response events are normally conducted by Local Workforce Development Boards' Business Services Department.

Sector Partnerships

Sector partnerships are partnerships of business leaders, from the same industry and in a shared labor market region, who work with education, workforce development, economic development, and community organizations to address the workforce and other competitiveness needs of their industry.

TAA - Trade Adjustment Assistance

TAA is a federal program that provides workers adversely affected by trade with opportunities to obtain the skills, credentials, resources, and support necessary to (re)build skills for future jobs. Any member of a worker group certified by the U.S. Department of Labor may be eligible to receive training, employment and case management services, job search allowances, relocation allowances, and income support in the form of Trade Readjustment Allowances (TRA).

TRA - Trade Readjustment Allowance

Trade Readjustment Allowance is an income support benefit available to those workers who were laid off or had hours reduced because their employer was adversely affected by increased imports from other countries.

Unemployment Insurance (UI)

A program providing cash benefits to eligible workers who are unemployed through no fault of their own (as determined under State law), and who meet other eligibility requirements of State law.

Upskilling

Employees receiving upgraded or additional skills to remain competitive.

U.S. Department of Labor (DOL)

The U.S. Department of Labor is charged with preparing the American workforce for new and better jobs, and ensuring the adequacy of America's workplaces. It is responsible for a wide variety of workplace activities for nearly 10 million employers and well over 100 million workers.

Veteran

Veterans have solid training through their military experience. Veterans are often directed to services that transition and enhance the skills they acquired in the military.

Wagner-Peyser Act

The Wagner-Peyser Act of 1933 established a nationwide system of public employment offices commonly known as the Employment Service. The Act was amended in 1998 to make the Employment Service part of the One-Stop service delivery system.

WARN - Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act

WARN Act offers protection to workers, their families and communities by requiring employers to provide written notice 60 days in advance of covered plant closings and covered mass layoffs. This notice must be provided to either affected workers or their representatives (e.g., a labor union), to the Dislocated Worker Unit and to the appropriate unit of local government.

WIOA

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act was signed into law on July 22, 2014. WIOA is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy.

Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit provides federal income tax credits for new hires from among eight target groups. An employer's federal income tax liability can be reduced by as much as \$2400 per eligible hire.

Workforce Development Board (WDB)

In partnership with state and local elected officials, WDBs plan and oversee the local workforce development system. These boards must have at least 50 percent of its members as representatives of private industry and business. Oklahoma is divided into six different Workforce Development Boards.

Youth

Youth who qualify for services are those who range from age 14-24, possibly in low-income families and face a variety of challenges in becoming self-sufficient and stable in their careers.

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