



# Progress Report

December 2008

[www.laworks.net](http://www.laworks.net)



## Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Legislators,

We at the Louisiana Workforce Commission have been tasked with leading the development of an effective, demand-driven workforce delivery system. Everything we do as an agency is being refocused to enable us to provide the indispensable components of workforce delivery so that our state can compete and win in a global economy.

In this report, you will read about our priorities and plans for getting the job done, and about our progress so far.

We have traveled across the state to engage our partners and our customers and to learn for ourselves about their unique needs to ensure that we build the new Louisiana Workforce Commission to deliver real solutions to real problems at the speed of business.

As we move into the implementation phase of many of our initiatives, we will remain focused on providing the best service possible to all of our customers – business and industry and job seekers across the state.

We will provide regular reports on our progress and look forward to working with all of our partners and customers to reach our shared goal of delivering the workforce Louisiana needs to continue to grow and prosper.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tim Barfield". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and "B".

Tim Barfield  
Executive Director

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**Our vision**

The Louisiana Workforce Commission will be an indispensable provider of workforce solutions.

**Our mission**

The Louisiana Workforce Commission will lead the development of the system that delivers the workforce needed by Louisiana's current and future employers.



## Executive Summary

The Louisiana Workforce Commission has been charged with leading the integration of workforce development programs to provide an effective, demand-driven service delivery system.

The LWC has taken many steps toward that goal since the unanimous passage of reform legislation by the 2008 Louisiana Legislature.

### *Workforce Development*

During July and August, LWC staff traveled across the state to meet with more than 800 business leaders, economic development leaders and elected officials to learn firsthand about their workforce development needs and the needs of their regions.

The LWC used the information gathered at these meetings to set the agenda for its regional workforce summits held this fall in Lafayette and Monroe. At the summits, more than 800 participants heard from Gov. Jindal and the leadership of the LWC, Louisiana Economic Development, the Louisiana Community and Technical College System and the Departments of Public Safety and Corrections, Education and Social Services about the roles of their agencies in workforce development.

During breakout sessions, participants were able to communicate directly with agency representatives and other key stakeholders about their needs and determined action items for the LWC, other agencies and also themselves to start work toward meeting those needs. These action items are available on the LWC's Web site at [www.laworks.net](http://www.laworks.net). The LWC will issue a separate report on the status of these items in the first quarter of 2009.

The LWC also has looked internally to improve its response to the needs of its customers. It has realigned the components of the Office of Workforce Development into three areas – regional operations, emerging workforce and customized workforce solutions. This will allow the department to better meet its objectives of strengthening the Workforce Investment Act framework, growing the workforce (primarily by recruiting people who are not fully engaged today), and addressing head on the need for unique solutions for industry sectors and major stakeholders in Louisiana's economic vitality.

The Workforce Investment Council has been seated and held its first meeting Dec. 17, with Gov. Jindal appointing Eddie Rispono to serve as Council chairman. Rispono serves as chairman of the Management Board of Industrial Specialty Contractors, LLC, and has been active in state workforce development efforts for many years. The Council, which will meet bimonthly, is charged with developing a strategic plan to coordinate and integrate a single statewide workforce development and delivery system that assures efficiency and cooperation among public and private entities. The Council also is charged with occupational forecasting, which will be used to drive programs and funding for job training, and with advising the governor on the needs of Louisiana's employers and its workforce.

By early next year, the Office of Workforce Development will charter the state's Workforce Investment Boards and their regional Business and Career Solutions Centers. This process will establish performance standards, policies, roles and responsibilities of the Workforce Investment Boards, their staffs and local service operations.

In spring 2009, the LWC also will begin one major initiative and one pilot program to expand the Louisiana workforce. The major initiative will involve the recruitment and coordination of community and faith-based organizations to reach out to the significant portion of our population – perhaps as many as 750,000 people – who are not fully engaged in our workforce because they are not working or are underemployed. The LWC also will work with partner agencies and business and industry to pilot a recruitment effort out of state aimed at attracting job-ready personnel for vacancies that our own workforce has not been able to fill.

### ***Unemployment Insurance Administration***

Reform efforts have begun in the LWC's Office of Unemployment Insurance Administration. These efforts have three primary goals:

1. Improve customer service. Those who deserve unemployment benefits should be able to file for them easily and receive those benefits when they're due without unwarranted delays. Those who do not deserve benefits should not be able to clog the system with frivolous claims.
2. Put the unemployed back to work as quickly as possible. When a shortage of able workers is one of the largest impediments to Louisiana's economic growth, the unemployed who are receiving benefits are a particularly valuable source of labor at many skill levels.
3. Reduce the administrative cost of the unemployment insurance system on businesses and taxpayers. The LWC is redesigning the unemployment claims and tax processes to make them simpler, and is automating many functions to make them faster and more accurate. This will improve performance even during surges, such as after hurricanes, while also reducing operating costs.

### ***Workers' Compensation***

Reform efforts will be undertaken in the Office of Workers' Compensation with an overarching goal of reducing time in the system. Initiatives include reviewing and possibly revising the medical reimbursement fee schedule, enhancing records management, speeding up medical treatment, accelerating the resolution of medical and indemnity disputes and integrating vocational rehabilitation with workforce development.

### ***Internal Performance Improvement***

We recognize that the performance of the LWC itself must improve before the department can improve the delivery of significant and complex services to its customers. Therefore, the LWC is instituting an employee performance improvement program that will be among the most progressive in the state Civil Service system.

The goals of this new system are to reduce the time needed to refocus the agency on its new priorities, to align every job with the mission and goals of the agency, and to ensure that every employee is focused on delivering top-quality service to customers, whether they are external or internal.

The new Performance Planning and Review policy and procedures call for quarterly planning and rating sessions for all staff, merit pay increases that are earned, and extra rewards for high performers. The new program ensures all employees will be given clear expectations, the tools needed to meet them, incentives for doing so and consequences more quickly for those who do not.

All components of the new system are approved except for the high performance rewards program. The Civil Service Commission will consider it in January. The program will take four or five months to implement fully.

## Progress Report

### *General Overview*

#### **Reform Agenda**

- Integration of workforce development programs and demand-driven service delivery
- Strengthening role of Louisiana Community and Technical College System
- Rapid response capability
- Fast Start program
- Education (K-12)

#### **Reform Implementation Timeline**

- Late June 2008: Passage of reform legislation
- July – August: Business engagement meetings across the state
  - 800 business leaders, economic development leaders and elected officials
- October: Internal realignment within the Office of Workforce Development
- October – November: Workforce Summits
  - 800 attendees in Lafayette and Monroe
  - Valuable input, available at laworks.net
  - Report in first quarter 2009
- January – May 2009: Implement Performance Planning and Review improvements
- Fiscal 2008-09:
  - Grow the workforce
  - Multi-agency planning to integrate workforce development programs
- Fiscal 2009-10: Implement integration plans

### *Workforce Development*

#### ***2008 – 09 Workforce Development Priorities***

- Leadership
  - Coordinate, facilitate and integrate the workforce development system
- Invigorate and strengthen the Workforce Investment Act framework
- Address major workforce challenges
  - Customized workforce solutions
  - Large employers, industry sectors, regions, agencies
- Enlarge the workforce
  - Under-engaged La. population; recruit to La. for specific jobs; immigrant workers
- Improve Workforce Commission performance
  - Improve customer service
  - Redirect resources from “overhead” to priorities

## ***Internal Realignment***

### **Goals**

- Improve service to employers and job seekers at local and regional levels
- Reflect the priorities of the Commission
- Invigorate the Office of Workforce Development leadership
- Improve efficiency of internal operations
- Align the Office of Workforce Development with functional requirements
- Enable program integration

### **Structure**

- Integrated Field Operations (Workforce Investment Boards, regional operations)
- Emerging Workforce (growing the workforce)
- Customized Workforce Solutions

### **Leadership**

- Tia Edwards, Deputy Executive Director, LWC  
Direct oversight of the Office of Workforce Development, reporting to Executive Director Barfield
  - Coordination and administration of Workforce Investment Council (forecasting, performance management and accountability), Operations (External and Internal Integration), Performance/Compliance/Monitoring, Technical Assistance/Special Projects, Occupational Information Services
- Stacy Bonnaffons, Director of Workforce Development
  - Customized workforce solutions, including Incumbent Worker Training Program (IWTP)/Small Business Employee Training (SBET), Business Services, Rapid Response, Foreign Labor, Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Apprenticeship, Labor Programs

### **New Leaders**

- Deidria Bolden, Deputy Director of Operations, Internal and external integration
  - Former Program Manager II with the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS), Revenue Maximization Initiative, overseeing regional-based staff who determine medical coverage and funding for foster and adoptive children.
  - Has experience with all income assistance support and related welfare-to-work employment; helping adults and youth reach self-sufficiency; and working within the technical college system to assist single parents, displaced homemakers and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients with life and career skills.
- Don Howard, Deputy Director, Integrated Field Operations
  - Former Assoc. Director of LSU Career Services over Job Search and Employment Services; Director of Career Services at Gwinnett Technical College in Atlanta; Regional Field Coordinator for Ga. Dept. of Technical and Adult Education with oversight of Georgia Fatherhood program on 18 technical college campuses.
- Johnny Riley, Deputy Director, Emerging Workforce
  - Former City of Monroe Executive Administrative Officer for Mayor James Mayo, then Director of Community Affairs
  - With State Farm Insurance for 14 years as Accounting Supervisor, Emerging Markets Director, State Farm Bank Regional Director and Asst. Manager of Education and Development for more than 5,000 employees and agents in five states.

## **Activities**

### **Workforce Investment Boards/Workforce Investment Area & Business and Career Solutions Centers (by February 2009)**

- Charter and certify WIBs and Business and Career Solutions Centers
- Establish performance standards, policies, roles and responsibilities of the WIBs and WIA staff
- Education and training (by January 2009)
  - Parish and city chief elected officials
  - WIBs
  - Business and Career Solutions Center staff

### **Workforce Investment Council**

- Membership seated November 2008
  - First meeting Dec. 17
  - Eddie Rispono appointed chairman by Gov. Jindal
  - Meetings scheduled bimonthly beginning in February 2009
- Training with WIB members

### **Occupational Information Systems (by March 2009)**

- Establish OIS based on recognized models.
- Better integrate occupational forecasting data with workforce development activity, economic development activity, management information systems and labor market information

### **Growing the workforce (Fiscal 2008-09)**

- Recruiting from the 750,000 who are not fully engaged in the workforce
- Come Home to Louisiana: Piloted out-of-state recruitment for unmet needs

### **Program integration**

- Plan and carry out integration of workforce-related programs from other agencies to the Workforce Commission; integration consultant to be hired in January 2009
- Planning in FY2008-09; implementation in FY2009-10
- Includes performance management and accountability
  - Working with 4 centers at ULL
    - Picard Center for Child Development and Lifelong Learning
    - Moody Business School
    - Louisiana Immersive Technologies Enterprise
    - Center for Business & Information Technologies

## ***Office of Unemployment Insurance Administration***

### ***Customer service approach***

#### **Strategic planning (summer 2008 through January 2009)**

- Improve time to first benefit payment
- Reduce administrative burden on LWC and taxpayers
- Return unemployed to work faster
- Increase accuracy of payments
- Handle surges related to disasters

#### **Multiple implementation initiatives**

- Identification of best practices, study of requirements/law
  - Due January 2009
- Improve efficiency of existing processes
  - Study completed October 29
  - Solution design and testing completed by January 31
  - Implementation beginning February 1
- Call center, workflow and document imaging improvements
  - Begun in spring 2008
  - Phased implementations in March and May 2009
  - Improve call center capacity, quality and customer service
- LaCATS, to start in 2009
  - Redesign of back-end Unemployment Insurance (UI) claims and tax system
  - Full integration with front-end systems
  - Maximized automation of process improvements and UI program redesign
  - Faster service for claimants
  - Reduced burden on employers
  - Reduced operating costs for LWC

## *Office of Workers' Compensation*

### ***Overarching goal: reduce time in the system***

- Review/Revise medical reimbursement fee schedule
  - Explore value pricing and implement with guidelines and e-billing
- Enhance records management
  - Move to e-filing, data dumping and electronic archiving
- Speed up medical treatment
  - Implement evidence-based treatment guidelines
- Accelerate resolution of medical and indemnity disputes
  - Includes electronic docketing and filing systems
- Integrate vocational rehabilitation with workforce development
  - Drive injured workers into the labor force with retraining via LCTCS
- Reduce fraud by targeting businesses not providing workers' compensation insurance for employees

## Regional Highlights

During the Workforce Summits this fall, the LWC hosted regional breakout sessions designed to engage business and economic development leaders and other key stakeholders at the local and regional levels in workforce development reform.

In these sessions, participants agreed on action items necessary to move the reform agenda forward.

In many instances, the state's Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) were tasked with taking the lead on these items. Following are reports from some of the local operations.

### **La. Workforce Investment Areas 10, 11, 12 and 14 (Region 1 Partnership)** (Parishes of Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. James, St. John the Baptist and St. Tammany)

The Regional Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) and Regional Business Services team took the lead in organizing and submitting a Community-Based Job Training Grant to the U.S. Department of Labor. This process involved bringing all of the local Community and Technical Colleges together to work collectively with WIBs and employers to develop a comprehensive statement of work and grant application.

Region 1 is committed to working regionally as evidenced by monthly meetings of the regional WIB Directors to discuss issues related to regional initiatives. Recently, this process was expanded to establish monthly meetings of the regional Local Area Coordinators to discuss policies and procedures that will help facilitate a regional approach to workforce issues in the Business and Career Solutions Centers.

The Executive Committees of the four regional WIBs are scheduled to meet in early 2009 to address common issues related to the priorities of the Boards.

Through our regional business staff, we have established a toll-free number to connect both job seekers and employers with the Business and Career Solutions Centers throughout the region.

The Southeast Louisiana Regional Alliance, which is composed of more than 300 key stakeholders from education, workforce, economic development, human services and employers, will continue to meet to develop a strategy to enhance the economic prosperity of the region. The 18-member Leadership Team is scheduled to meet on Feb. 2 and the Alliance is scheduled to launch the Regional Alliance Network Web site in December 2009.

Activities so far include:

- Regionally coordinated effort to address and streamline activities around Lockheed Martin layoff, including ongoing strategy and planning meetings of leadership and key personnel.
- Regionally coordinated hiring, supervising and training of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) specialty staff that have processed assessments and assisted in coordinating activities of three different CDBG projects to maximize efficiency for the four LWIAs.
- Developed and distributed marketing pieces that are currently being used by the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), Small Business Administration (SBA) and others in the region. The pieces showcase the services available to businesses and/or job seekers across the region and provide a single access point (toll-free number) for accessing those services.
- Coordinated regional training for Business and Career Solutions Center staff (Business Services Representatives (BSRs) and the Recruitment & Placement Teams). These trainings also provided more cross-regional team building opportunities.
- Conducted the region's first annual leadership retreat in November that included WIB Directors, Local Area and Regional Coordinators, Team Leaders, and other key personnel in leadership roles.

It is also noteworthy that the region played a large volunteer role at the National Workforce Conference in July. Leadership presented at the conference about strategic regional collaboration among WIBs and

LWIAs. Several Business and Career Solutions Centers, as well as one of the regional mobile units, served as focal points of the conference. Meetings were held with out-of-state visiting workforce regions to discuss best practices – Florida and Minnesota.

### **La. Workforce Investment Areas 20 and 21**

**(Parishes of Ascension, East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, Iberville, Livingston, Pointe Coupee, St. Helena, Tangipahoa, Washington, West Baton Rouge and West Feliciana)**

- Established a Regional Workforce Planning Team to bring together the key workforce players in the region, including business and industry, economic development, education and the workforce system to continuously identify the workforce challenges facing the region and to develop strategies and solutions to address those challenges.
- Regional Team Leaders will meet quarterly to share information and ideas.
- Business Services Representatives meet on a regular basis to discuss regional issues and marketing strategies.
- Workgroups were established to create a common on-the-job training format.
- WIA staff participate on a committee formed to evaluate demand occupations in the region. The committee, which has met three times with good private industry representation, is chaired by a member of private industry. A final committee report will be completed by Jan. 8.
- In the process of creating a “Workforce Development Resource Guide.”
- Has a Business Service Unit Committee composed of board members representing private industry. Their mission is to maximize employer participation in the workforce system by educating and involving employers in creating key business services through input and recommendations on services and delivery methods for local businesses through employer forums.

### **La. Workforce Investment Area 31**

**(Parishes of Assumption, Lafourche and Terrebonne)**

Jane Arnette, director of the South Central Industrial Association, hosted a meeting on Dec. 9 at the CAMCO/John Deere Training Center attended by LWC Executive Director Tim Barfield, the local Workforce Investment Board, Business and Career Solutions Center - Work Connection, Inc. staff and private businesses.

Main issues discussed were housing, transportation and the lack of a skilled workforce.

The area Youth Coordinator is working on soft skills training for participants both inside and outside of the school system.

The Business and Career Solutions Center - Work Connection, Inc. provides a human resource area for all business needs and offers WorkKeys and assessments to the business community.

Staff enrolled 143 participants whose jobs were impacted by Gustav or Ike, with 22 of these finding permanent jobs.

### **La. Workforce Investment Areas 40 and 41**

**(Parishes of Acadia, Evangeline, Iberia, Lafayette, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Mary and Vermilion)**

These two WIAs have jointly created a workgroup committee made up of individuals who have a passion to be involved with current and future workforce needs in the public and private sectors and to provide Louisiana with well-trained and educated citizens.

This body, which is chaired by Syd Crawford of CLM Equipment, has met regularly since November, with nearly half of attendees representing the private sector.

The workgroup also has formed six subcommittees:

- Employer Market Penetration - set a goal of having 75 percent of area employers post their job vacancies on the LWC's Web site within one year.

- LAWWORKS FOCUS - will critique and make suggestions to the LWC on how to make the agency Web site more beneficial to employers and job seekers.
- Resource Mapping - development of a database that identifies all workforce development resources available to employers and job seekers in the region and will be accessible on the Internet at the WIBs' local Web sites.
- Education/Student Recruitment - will build a bridge between the K-12 system and workforce development by working with the school system on curriculum development.
- Emerging Workforce Committee - will help individuals from untapped labor pools such as veterans, ex-offenders and other non-traditional workers re-enter the workforce.
- Workforce Recruitment - will recruit workers from areas outside of Acadiana to fill current vacancies.

### **La. Workforce Investment Area 51**

#### **(Parishes of Calcasieu, Cameron and Jefferson Davis)**

Members of the Workforce Investment Board (WIB) Executive Committee and appropriate LWIA staff met on two occasions to discuss the LWC's proposed changes to the local WIB structure and workforce development initiatives.

These meetings resulted in proposed changes in the number of board members and representation criteria. This information has been presented to the local Police Jury administration for review and subsequently approved for implementation, along with proceeding to solicit nominations to the WIB.

The workforce development reform initiatives and proposed board structure changes will be presented to the full WIB at its January 2009 meeting.

The LWIA staff and Executive Committee are working closely with local service providers to meet the immediate need for craftsmen in the local area. Two fast-track welding classes are scheduled to begin in December, one at La. Technical College - Sowela Campus and one at Associated Builder Contractors (ABC). Staff is in discussion with the Shaw Group to aid with its trade crafts needs.

An employers' seminar was held on Nov. 5 which focused on topics to aid employers in running their businesses more efficiently. The LWIA also has expanded its Employer-Based Training to include more of the larger local plant and aviation industries, i.e. Sasol and Aeroframe.

### **La. Workforce Investment Area 60**

#### **(Parishes of Avoyelles, Catahoula, Concordia, Grant, LaSalle and Winn)**

- Meeting with local partners to continue the discussion around workforce improvement.
- Met with Workforce Investment Board Chair and Police Jury Presidents' Consortium to begin planning for six parishwide workforce summits to be held in early 2009, which will include employers, education leaders and the community.
- Setting up meeting with LWIA 61 to further identify regional initiatives.

### **La. Workforce Investment Area 82**

#### **(Parishes of Morehouse, Union and West Carroll)**

Opened Worker Transition Center on Dec. 2 for workers affected by International Paper (IP) closure. The center, which is scheduled to be open until the end of January, provides a supportive environment for employees to access comprehensive services in a single location. Staff from the Louisiana Human Resources Development Institute and LWIA 81, 82 and 83 provide assistance in the center.

More than 330 IP employees attended orientation meetings during early December.

The Regional Workforce Group will meet on Dec. 30 to review notes from the workforce summit and begin developing a workforce solution plan for Northeast Louisiana.

A job fair and education expo is planned for Jan. 8 at the Bastrop Municipal Center, with the Northeast Louisiana Economic Alliance taking the lead on organizing the event.

## **Next Steps**

The Louisiana Workforce Commission has set broad priorities for turning our vision into reality. As we focus on these priorities in the coming year, we will provide timely updates on our progress through reports such as this, newsletters, emails and other communications to our stakeholders.

We will soon issue a separate report on the status of the action items developed by the LWC, its partners and customers at the Workforce Summits this fall.

We hope that you will continue to support our efforts to build an indispensable workforce delivery system for our state's businesses and job seekers.