Oklahoma

PY 2014 Agricultural Outreach Plan
[Modified July, 2014]

Summary of Annual Agricultural Outreach Plan Requirements

The Agricultural Outreach Plan (AOP) portion of the State Plan must describe plans for providing services to the agricultural community, both for agricultural employers and Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFWs), as described in Wagner-Peyser (W-P) regulations at 20 CFR 653.107, the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title I final regulations at 20 CFR 652.107(b)(1), the WIA/W-P Act Integrated Workforce Planning Guidance, and the Unified Planning Guidance. This attachment provides detail of states that must be included in the AOP section of the State Plan.

A. *Assessment of Need. The assessment of need must include:*

(i) A review of the previous year's agricultural activity in the state.

Oklahoma is a state of many climates and ecosystems. It is found in the Great Plains, is geographically centered within the 48 contiguous states and is the 20th largest state at 69,903 square miles. Ecosystems range from dry, arid plains to subtropical forests and mountains, having more ecological regions than any other state. Elevations range from 4,368 feet above sea level in the western panhandle to 289 feet above sea level in the southeast portion of the state. The mean elevation of the Oklahoma is considered to be 1,300 feet above sea level. Because of Oklahoma's location between regions of varying prevailing winds, its climate, winds, temperatures and weather, it makes for extreme variance in a locality's weather from day-to-day and extreme change between areas in close proximity. Because of this, an average of 62 tornados a year, drought, flood, extreme temperature variations and unpredictable weather in general, Oklahoma farmers deal with very unpredictable seasons, making for constantly changing plans for raising and changing crops and livestock in an attempt to turn a profit.

Average annual precipitation ranges from 18" over 59 days in the western portion of the state to 51.9" over 96 days in the eastern portion of the state. Frost free periods in the western portions are typically about 143 days and 185 days in the eastern portion.

The following information regarding Oklahoma agriculture was obtained from the 2013 Oklahoma Agricultural Statistics, issued cooperatively by the National Agricultural Statistics Service and the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry. (This is a summary of data through 2012, which is the most currently available data.)

- Total harvested acres of principal crops: 8,160,300 acres
- Total Value of 17 top Commodities: $ 6,701 billion
- Total number of farms: 85,500
- Total land in farms: 34,800,000 acres
- Average farm size: 407 acres

Oklahoma national agricultural rankings for crop production:

- Rye 1
- Canola & Winter Wheat 2
- All Wheat, Pecans & all Other Hay 4
- All Hay, Sorghum, Grain 6
- Peanuts, Sunflower & Sorghum, Silage 9
- Watermelons 14
- All cotton and Cottonseed 15
- Oats 25
- Soybeans 27
- Corn, Grain & Alfalfa Hay 28
- Corn, Silage 30

Oklahoma national agricultural rankings for livestock:

- Beef Cows 4
- All Cows, Cattle & Calves 5
- Calf Crop 6
- Cattle on Feed 7
- Hogs 8
- Broiler Production 11
- Red Meat Production 14
- Sheep and Lambs 20
- All Chickens 25
- Eggs 26
- Wool Production 28
- Milk Production and Milk Cows 30

Identify each major labor-intensive crop activity in the previous year, indicating the months of heavy activity and the geographic area of prime activity.

Using the same data source cited previously in this section:

Most major crops in Oklahoma are no longer considered labor-intensive with the exception of watermelon. Increased mechanization/technology, herbicides and genetically superior seeds/plants have continued to greatly reduce the need for vast numbers of laborers as in years past. However the specialty crops/livestock related products and vegetables/produce for Farmer's Markets are increasingly providing labor-intense work opportunities. Others have pursued some of these new ventures such as: Grass-fed dairy/beef, free range chicken and revitalization of sheep for meat, wool and wool products.

The frost free period is from mid-April until the 3rd week of October. Heaviest crop activity related to planting and harvesting breaks out as follows:

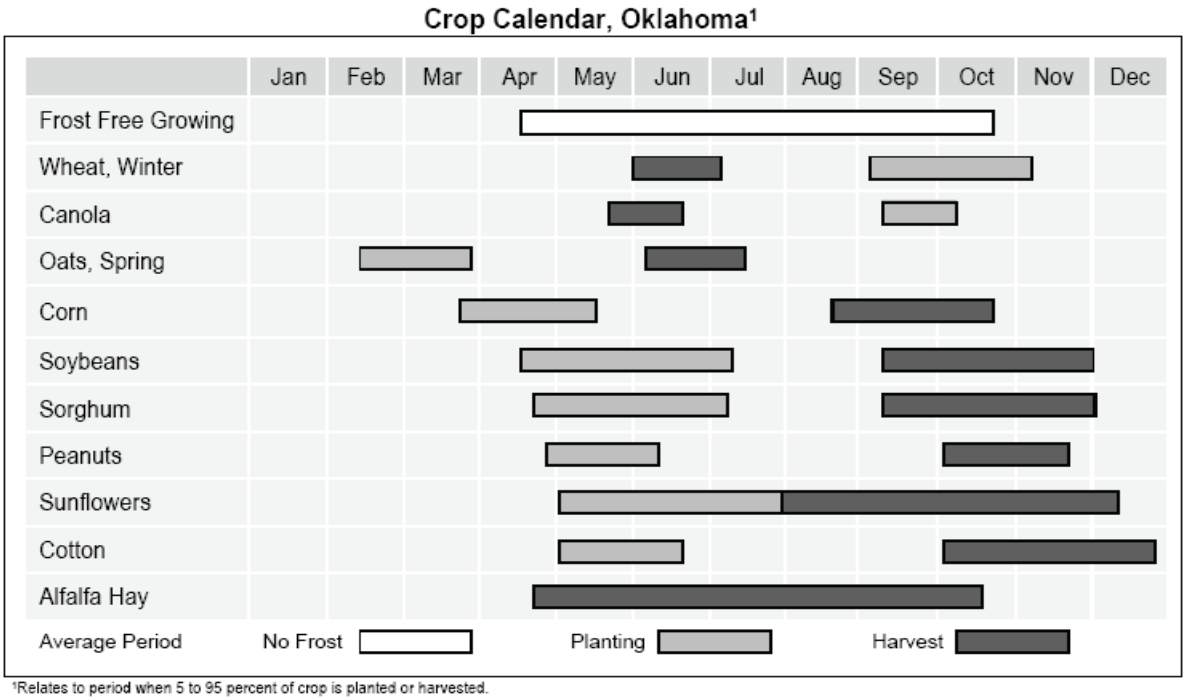

Chart is from 2013 Oklahoma Agricultural Statistics, page 15.

Oklahoma is most easily divided west and east with regard to agricultural activity.

WESTERN OKLAHOMA- is a predominant supplier of wheat, sorghum, canola, peanuts, cotton, corn and alfalfa.

EASTERN OKLAHOMA- is a predominant supplier of soybeans, hay, and corn.

Overall, Oklahoma crop production improved in 2012, with:

- **Small Grains** – Above normal wheat yields, due to timely rain, brought yields up 120% from 2011. Oats more than doubled 2011 yields. Rye increased 53%
- **Row Crops** - Production of corn for grain increased 90%. Sorghum, following a record low in 2011, found 30,000 less acres planted in 2012 but a 74% increase in production. Cotton also found fewer acres planted, but almost a doubling of production. Soybean was up slightly, peanuts were up 53% and canola production was 89% higher. Sunflowers were down 9%.
- **Hay** – Production of all hay was up 88% from 2011.
- **Miscellaneous Crops** – Pecan production was 4 times that of 2011. Watermelon production was 51% higher.

(ii) A review of the previous year's MSFW activity in the state.

Estimate the agricultural labor employed in each of the crops identified in item (i) above. Estimate the number of MSFWs involved in each, and indicate crop areas that experienced labor shortages.

A review of various sources found no viable information for MSFW labor involvement and/or shortages in Oklahoma agriculture. The 2012 USDA, Census of Agriculture at the state level did provide some general information.

- 18,108 Oklahoma farms hired 51,119 workers in 2012. Of those, 189 total farms reported total migrant workers of 858. A further breakout reveals 49 farms reporting only contract MSFW labor of 104 and 140 farms reporting 754 migrant workers with hired labor.
- Trends from the 2002, 2007 & 2012 census present the following:

  - Total farms utilizing migrant workers have shown
    - 379 farms in 2002,
    - 919 farms in 2007 and
    - **Only 189 farms in 2012.**

A drop off of farms utilizing this type of worker is found to be 79% in the past 5 years.

  - Despite the migrant worker numbers, total farms with hired farm labor, in general, have continued to grow.

    Farms / *Workers*
    - *17,700* / *50,134* in 2002;
    - *16,826* / *48,644* in 2007 and
    - *18,108* / *51,119 in 2012.*

This would seem to indicate more local labor being on the payroll versus migrant workers being brought in to work.

(iii) A projected level of agricultural activity in the state for the coming year.

Identify any changes from last year's crop activities as described in item (ii) above.

Preliminary data from USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service and the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry indicate:

- Most major crops and livestock totals were down in 2013 due to severe drought throughout a large portion of the state. Corn, sorghum, hay, canola, sunflower, soybeans, and cotton/cottonseed did show some gain over 2012.

- Total acreage planted was higher in 2013 by 58,000 acres, but harvested acreage dropped by 733,000 acres.

- 30 years of reasonably wet weather followed by 3 years of drought. By mid-September 2013, 95% of the state was experiencing “extreme” drought conditions, 42% were in “exceptional” drought, with soil almost entirely dried out.
- Predicting Oklahoma weather in the long term is almost impossible because of the dynamics of various regions influences upon it. It can be said, at the worst point of extreme/exceptional drought and a mild winter, rains did come in June 2014. It is anticipated 2014 numbers overall related to agriculture in Oklahoma will be up.

(iv) A projected number of MSFWs in the state for the coming year, which must take into account data supplied by WIA Section 167 National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantees, other MSFW organizations, employer organizations and federal and/or state agency data sources such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Employment and Training Administration.

2013-2014 trends would indicate a continuing downward trend for the use of MSFWs in traditional crop production due to unpredictable season & weather factors, continuing improvements and use of agricultural machinery, herbicides, and seeds/plantings. Weather will play a large role in seasonal prep, planting, maintaining, harvesting and finishing of all crops, frequently changing numbers of workers needed onsite from day to day. Weather will bring long periods waiting on the weather to break, resulting in short bursts of high activity, mostly being completed by local and available workers.

A slightly different prediction is presented by data from O*Net Online. Reviewing their *10 year – 2012-2020 predictions most agricultural positions in Oklahoma will show some growth*:

- 45-2091.00 Agricultural Equipment Operators +10%
- 45-2092.00 Farmworkers and Laborers, Crop, Nursery, and Greenhouse +11%
- 45-2093.00 Farmworkers, Farm, Ranch and Aquacultural Animals +12%
- 45-2041.00 Graders and Sorters, Agricultural Products +13%

These numbers could be reflective of hiring more local workers or simply hiring more people willing to be transient and/or not-full-time workers, who are willing to take any work available.

A review of DOL ETA 9002 series reports has provided the following data for MSFWs in Oklahoma:

- 12/31/2012 – Total = 65 Entered Employment= 43.9% Employed at 6 months= 75%
- 12/31/2013 – Total = 49 Entered Employment= 67.39% Employed at 6 months= 70.97%
- **06/30/2014 - Total = 63 Entered Employment= 69.44% Employed at 6 months= 72.73%*
  ** Partial Year*

These numbers could be reflective of more self-identification as MSFW and/or increased numbers of MSFW not being employed & registering for unemployment or seeking work. It would be anticipated MSFW workers will remain approximately the same as traditional work for them may decrease and employment on smaller farms/enterprises of a holistic/green economy increase.

Finally, casual discussion with WIA Section 167 National Farmworker Jobs Program (NJJP) grantee and employers in agriculture during the 2014 Annual Prevailing Wage Survey has presented two additional factors for consideration:

1. The continuing increase in energy related employment in Oklahoma entices many of the ranchers, farmers and harvesters best workers away. Unable to keep up with energy related wages, agricultural workers are reportedly less skilled and less dependable. Several employers report dealing with many who want to work on a day-to-day basis, with no commitment to the job.

2. Another unfortunate reality is that although Oklahoma has made it difficult to hire illegal immigrants through tougher laws and regulations than most states, Oklahoma now has

the fastest increase in the nation for people without legal status. According to the Pew Research Center, 75,000 undocumented immigrants (mostly Mexican) call Oklahoma home. Of those, it is very likely a large number are working in agricultural settings, where enforcement of laws and regulations is nearly impossible and they go uncounted. Any activity such as this does and will continue to affect the agricultural worker numbers.

2% of all Oklahoma farms and ranches hire migrant workers. In 2012, a total of 858 migrant workers were reported by the 2012 USDA, Census of Agriculture. ***It would be anticipated, the number of migrant workers will range between 800-1,000 workers for the next year. Using data from O*Net online, an average increase of 1-3% per year of all MSFW could be projected.***

B. Outreach Activities. The local offices outreach activities must be designed to meet the needs of MSFWs in the state and to locate and contact MSFWs who are not being reached through normal intake activities.

The Oklahoma Employment Security Commission (OESC) continues to seek identification of and contact with the changing face of Oklahoma's migrant and seasonal farmworker (MSFW) population. The increasing changes in agricultural based technology and mechanization, along with the second worst drought period in Oklahoma history, seem to have contributed to a leveling off of our MSFW population. However, despite the changes and extreme conditions, Oklahoma remains one of the top agricultural states in the United States and continues to recognize there are many MSFWs working and living here.

Oklahoma strives to continue improvement interacting with and providing assistance to our MSFW community. Oklahoma is not designated as a significant MSFW state. There are no full-time agricultural outreach workers retained by OESC. Almost all contact with MSFWs comes through our Oklahoma Workforce offices when MSFWs register for unemployment, agricultural outreach activities for Foreign Labor certifications are needed or complaints are made. Better interaction with Oklahomans for Rural Opportunities Development Corporation (ORO) should also become a greater source for sharing information about OESC and other partners' services, training opportunities, and rights/health information.

The plan for the proposed outreach activities must include:

(i) ***The goals for the number of MSFWs who will be contacted during the program year by W-P staff. The plan should also include the number of MSFWs who will be contacted during the year by other agencies under cooperative arrangements. These numerical goals must be based on the number of MSFWs estimated to be in the state in the coming year, taking into account the varying concentration of MSFWs during the seasons in each geographic area, the range of services needed in each area and the number of W-P and/or cooperating agency staff who will conduct outreach.***[1]

Several proposed outreach activities are in the planning stage or in their infancy at this time. A brief summary of each follows:

* Limited English Proficiency (LEP) group- The policy of OESC is to provide quality and timely language assistance services to customers with LEP to ensure meaningful access to programs, services and activities.

* Placement of bi-lingual Workforce Oklahoma office staff – 12 compensated bi-lingual positions in 8 local offices, with 4 others at various state office positions.

[1] The numerical goals that must be included in the agricultural outreach plan are in reference only to the proposed outreach activities and are not negotiated performance targets.

* Identification of pertinent groups, organizations and associations involved with the agricultural community.

* Establish networking and some structured communication with these groups, organizations and associations to help to identify ongoing needs and services.

* Identify and provide increased literature and media outreach to the agricultural community.

* Develop MSFW informational packet for workers and for employers summarizing available resources.

* Establish a more visible MSFW State Monitor Advocate internet presence.

* Provide more extensive training to OESC and partner staff in Workforce Oklahoma centers to better identify MSFWs, their needs and service requirements, and provide informational material to those MSFWs, employers and organizations in their counties served.

* Market Workforce Oklahoma centers as viable assistance centers for the MSFWs.

Numbers of MSFWs who will be contacted and review of those previously contacted and the method used are not available for this year's plan. There were none previously reported. Better methodology to identify MSFWs and networking with other service providers should allow for a more accurate count in the future. As of 6/30/2014, 63 MSFWs had established accounts in Oklahoma JobMatch (OKJM & previously known as Oklahoma Joblink, (OJL)). This compares with 65 in CY 2012 and 49 in CY 2013. At this pace, an increase in contact with MSFWs through Workforce OK offices should occur. Through census records we know employers reported 858 migrant workers on farms last year. It could be anticipated 80-100 MSFWs could be contacted in the next year.

(ii) An assessment of the resources available for outreach that includes:

1. ***The number of SWA staff positions the state will assign to outreach activities. The assessment must indicate the full-time equivalent positions for each local office to which staff must be assigned, and the number of staff assigned to the state office for this purpose.***

   Oklahoma is designated as a non-significant MSFW state. OESC does not plan to assign full-time agricultural outreach positions to any of its Workforce Centers, due to limited numbers of MSFWs.

2. ***Where the number of SWA staff positions assigned to outreach activities is less than in the prior year, please provide an explanation for the reduction and the expected effect of the reduction on direct outreach activities, as indicated in 20 CFR 653.107(h)(3)(i).***

   The number of SWA staff positions assigned to outreach activities has not changed. OESC does not plan to have a full-time or seasonal outreach worker in PY 2014 and will maintain the part-time MSFW State Monitor Advocate position.

3. ***The resources to be made available through existing cooperative agreements with public and private community service agencies and MSFW groups. (States are encouraged to initiate cooperative agreements with WIA Section 167 NFJP grantees for outreach position.)***

OESC will coordinate with the WIA Section 167 NFJP grantee, Oklahomans for Rural Opportunities Development Corporation (ORO), to identify MSFW needs, and to facilitate or provide intensive services and training services. This will be facilitated by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Cooperative agreements are not anticipated with other public or private community service groups. Nevertheless, OESC does plan to engage other groups, associations and organizations for the purpose of identifying and assisting MSFWs.

(ii) ***The tools which will be used to conduct outreach contacts, including personal contact, printed matter, videotapes, slides, and/or cassette recordings.***

It is anticipated this will involve a variety of personal, office, organizational and agency contact; printed materials, PowerPoint presentations and job/health fairs and other similar MSFW or culturally based opportunities to distribute information.

C. Services Provided to MSFWs through the American Job Center (AJC) Network. The plan must provide specific information on how core, intensive, and training services required under WIA Title I will be provided to MSFWs through the AJC network (previously referred to as the One-Stop Career Center system). States should provide information on how MSFWs will be provided staff-assisted services and how MSFWs will be served in an electronic environment in the AJCs and/or affiliate sites. States should consider how they will enable these AJC customers to advance their skills and be competitive in a local, regional and global economy.

Oklahoma prides itself on taking care of its citizens by whatever means are necessary within available resources. The MSFW, who seeks services through our workforce centers, is provided the same level of services as any other customer who walks through our doors.

The LEP program is identifying significant documents, informational materials and other items used on a daily basis in our workforce centers to translate to Spanish.

Our Oklahoma Joblink/OKJobMatch (OKJobMatch) database systems allow for a variety of language options.

Bi-lingual staffs are being placed in high volume offices serving those of Hispanic descent.

Partnership with the Oklahomans for Rural Opportunities Development Corporation (ORO), a current grantee provider of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title I Section 167 program and non-profit corporation of the State of Oklahoma, will continue to be developed and utilized by our workforce centers. ORO provides employment, training and supportive services to Oklahoma's MSFWs, often through referral from our workforce centers. ORO is located in 5 Workforce Oklahoma centers and work alongside OESC staff and other partners to provide increased services in the parts of the state with higher concentration of MSFW population.

OESC continues to maintain relationships with agencies who may assist or who work specifically with the MSFW; included but not limited to the Oklahoma Department of Commerce, Oklahoma Department of Education, and US and Oklahoma Departments of Labor. OESC will continue to work

in establishing new alliances with those entities which will be of assistance to us and the provision of services to MSFWs.

Meetings to realize a joint effort with others to locate and assist MSFWs will be attended. OESC plans to be a unifying force for this activity and networking in the future.

Ongoing cooperation between OESC's Director of Reemployment Services Customer Service Division, Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Director and State Monitor Advocate will ensure MSFW needs and services are addressed throughout the State's Workforce and WIA systems.

Increased interaction with Workforce Investment Boards is anticipated to communicate needs and ensure their commitment to working with the MSFW.

D. Services Provided to Agricultural Employers through the AJC Network. The plan must describe efforts that will be taken to provide services to agricultural employers in states with an adequate supply of U.S. workers and in those states where a shortage of workers is anticipated. The services provided to agricultural employers can be incorporated into the section of the WIA/W-P plan on serving employers in general.

Oklahoma does not anticipate a shortage of workers in the agricultural sector for the coming year.

Oklahoma utilizes Workforce Oklahoma Center managers and/or a designated staff to establish/maintain contact and facilitate many outreach activities to agricultural employers. They are also required to complete pre-occupancy housing inspections. If complaint investigations or field checks are required, again these staff will facilitate the reviews.

Additionally, Workforce Oklahoma Centers are available for providing agricultural employers the same level and proficiency of services provided to all employers. Some of which include:

- Informational services such as Labor Market data
- Useful employer website links for other agencies and organizations
- Provision of required state and federal employment posters
- Job Fair/Hiring event postings and, if needed, hosting or assisting with special/mass recruitment events by providing space, notices and postings on OK.Gov
- Access and ongoing assistance with OklahomaJobLink.com and OKJobMatch.com
- Recruitment assistance through self-service/staff-assisted job postings which solicit potential applicants locally, statewide and from other states

<u>OESC will continue to partner with others to reach out to agricultural employers to assist in sharing of information, compliance activity and, of course, obtaining competent and dependable workers.</u>

E. Data Analysis.

(i) Previous year's history (PY/FY 2013 Qtr 1 (Oct-Dec 2012) data is not retrievable) – Calendar Year 2013 data was used for this report.

Number of agricultural job orders and openings received,

There were 619 total agricultural job orders with 3,549 openings handled by the OESC- Oklahoma Joblink system (OJL). Of those, 383 job orders and 3,007 openings were related to the H-2A program. (It is believed true job openings are only half of this amount.)

Number of agricultural job orders filled,

The OJL system only reflects 3 hires for agricultural job orders. It is believed that most true openings are filled by prior season or personally referred workers not in our system. Secondly, employers state they frequently overestimate openings needed due to the immigration process which many times "stalls out" and leaves them with a shortage of workers, if they do not overstate their need.

Percent to be filled,

Again, tracking hires and the filling of openings is difficult and true numbers of openings cannot be established. It is estimated 75-80% of true openings are filled, leaving 20-25% of openings to be filled.

Number of interstate clearance orders received, and

A total of 410 interstate job orders were received from other states and 334 were entered into the OJL system.

Number of interstate clearance orders initiated.

47 interstate job orders initiated by Oklahoma are sent to labor supply states for entry into their systems once certified. 53 total were worked but 6 were handled in Oklahoma or held due to CNPC related issues.

(ii) Plan for upcoming year (based on estimated data):

Number of agricultural job orders expected to be received,

OESC estimates agricultural positions will remain steady with small growth in some areas anticipated. In keeping with that thought, agricultural job orders in the range of 600 – 800 are projected. (This includes interstate clearance orders from labor supply states.)

Number of agricultural job orders projected to be filled,

Current OJL data provides referral and hire information for those who report through the Oklahoma Workforce offices. An accurate number of openings and number filled are not captured at this time.

A plan to develop more aggressive employer/agent follow-up by SWA will be developed to:

1. Identify placements,

2. Encourage the use of OESC services, especially those associated with the Workforce OK offices and utilization of OKJobMatch. This would also include the availability of all partner services.

Percent to be filled,

As mentioned previously, it is believed that agricultural job order openings, especially those for H-2A, are inflated. Even when estimating "true openings", it is believed about 25% go unfilled as workers who could work in Oklahoma, start the season in Texas and continue there or migrate with harvesting crews to other states. Providing better job information and matching capabilities through OKJobMatch will hopefully link more local workers to available positions.

Estimated number of interstate clearance orders the state will receive, and

Oklahoma maintains a large population of MSFWs and is frequently a "home-base" for many who work in the adjacent states of Texas, Kansas, Arkansas, New Mexico and Colorado once seasons begin. 410 interstate job orders were received last year and it is projected that this year's will be slightly greater.

Estimated number of interstate clearance orders the state will initiate.

53 interstate job orders were initiated in Oklahoma to surrounding labor supply states last year. We project an increase of 60 to 80 job orders initiated by Oklahoma for this year. A broader-based agricultural recruitment method will be put on the agenda for next year with focus being the timely sharing of agricultural positions not only in Oklahoma but from surrounding supply states also. OESC will be proactive in ensuring all agricultural positions receive the publicity needed to keep seasonal and year-round positions filled.

F. Other Requirements.

(i) State Monitor Advocate. The plan must contain a statement that indicates that the State Monitor Advocate has been afforded the opportunity to review and comment on the PY 2014 AOP.

This AOP July, 2014 Modification was prepared and reviewed by Pam Hoskins, Oklahoma MSFW State Monitor Advocate.

(iii) Review and Public Comment. The plan must provide information indicating that WIA Section 167 NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations and other interested employer organizations, have been given an opportunity to comment on the state AOP. Include the list of organizations from which information and suggestions were solicited, any comments received, and state responses to those comments.

The Oklahoma AOP was sent out for review and comment as required. ORO and the director of the workforce centers have reported back as to the plan being "doable", "acceptable" and "a good starting point to direct our energies".

The completed plan was forwarded to: the Director of Oklahomans for Rural Opportunities Development Corporation (ORO); the Director of the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission (OESC) Re-Employment, Customer Support Division and the Director of the Oklahoma Department of Commerce (ODOC) Workforce Investment Act (WIA) programs.

The Director Of Strategic Initiatives, Policy & Program Services at the Oklahoma Department of Commerce (ODOC) was forwarded the plan for amended inclusion to the Wagner-Peyser/Workforce Investment Act five year state plan.