

**THE VALLEY WORKFORCE DEMONSTRATION PROJECT:
CONCEPTUAL DESIGN**

A Community-Based Initiative
of
Valley Interfaith

erving
Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr and Willacy Counties

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PROBLEM STATEMENT

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) brings both economic uncertainty and unprecedented opportunity for residents of the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Increased trade with Mexico and other countries to the south will undoubtedly result in significant job losses in agriculture and retail trade, but it will also open up jobs in other sectors of the local economy, particularly in industries manufacturing fabricated metals, rubber and plastics, and transportation equipment. The challenge, as always, is to manage these inevitable changes for the greatest economic benefit of area residents.

In the Valley, given the perpetually depressed state of the local economy and the relatively low education and skill levels of residents, this is an especially formidable task. Unemployment rates in the region always run two to three times state levels and consistently average 15 to 18 percent. Many who do have jobs find themselves among the working poor. They are employed either part- or full-time at jobs that do not pay enough to support themselves and their families. Consequently, more than half the residents of Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr and Willacy counties live in poverty and depend on some form of public assistance to survive.

Equally alarming, more than half the residents older than 24 have less than a high school education, and many who have earned high school diplomas lack the basic education and/or skills required for either further education or a well-paying job. All institutions of higher education in the region report that 80 to 90 percent of those seeking further education or skills training require some remediation before they can do college-level work.

The challenge of transforming the region's economy is even greater now, as a result of the latest financial crisis in Mexico and the subsequent devaluation of the peso. Nevertheless, there are signs of economic growth. The region remains among the ten fastest growing areas of the state, and employment opportunities are expanding in selected industries and occupations. The Valley's relatively young and rapidly growing population fuels an ever increasing demand for housing, health care, education, consumer goods, transportation and government services. Tourism, long a staple of the region's economy, continues to generate jobs, particularly in wholesale and retail trade.

Some of these new jobs require only minimum education and skill levels and are in low-paying occupations with few, if any, fringe benefits. An increasing number, however, is opening up in relatively high-skill, high-wage occupations requiring

specific skills and educational credentials beyond a high school diploma. Consequently, even with an abundant supply of labor in the area, chronic shortages plague some occupations. Skilled tool and die makers, licensed vocational nurses, registered nurses, respiratory therapists and bilingual teachers are in short supply.

Low education levels, language barriers, information gaps, transportation problems and other factors combine to shut many Valley residents out of these better jobs and disconnect them from the economic mainstream. Without better educations and more appropriate skills, these individuals will, at best, continue to find marginal employment, live in poverty and depend on some form of public assistance throughout their lives.

The Valley needs new institutional relationships that simultaneously address employers' needs for skilled workers and connect local residents with the quality jobs emerging in the region.

NATURE OF THE PROJECT

- **A two-year, community-based workforce demonstration project financed by a combination of federal, state and local funds to develop and implement:**
 - a market-driven approach to providing workforce services that contributes to sustained economic growth for the local area and provides access to quality jobs paying a living wage for the population served;
 - an enhanced set of workforce services that leads to significantly better jobs and earnings for the targeted population residing in the Valley's empowerment zone than is possible under current workforce service strategies; and
 - an integrated approach to providing participant services based on a one-stop model that offers easy access, maximum flexibility and services tailored to the needs of those seeking assistance.

- **A demonstration project that:**
 - is developed by leaders of Valley Interfaith and area employers to serve empowerment zone residents in Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr and Willacy counties;
 - restructures the way workforce education, job-training and employment services are planned and delivered in the four-county area;
 - combines funding from multiple sources to test service approaches which transcend the statutory and regulatory limitations imposed on individual workforce education, training and employment programs;
 - incorporates a distinct service process that reflects a one-stop, individualized approach to service delivery and that operates independently from other workforce programs in the area; and
 - has an independent evaluation to assess the impact of the enhanced service process on employment and earnings of individuals served.

- **Though initiated as a demonstration effort, this project will not give rise to another government program.** It is, rather, the first step toward creating a market-driven workforce system that will make the Lower Rio Grande Valley more competitive in the global economy and provide access to quality jobs for those not currently in or at risk of falling out of the economic mainstream.
- **A successful test of this approach will require a much different organizational culture than that found in most public workforce programs.** All project employees—including those funded by other organizations but involved in the service delivery process—must reflect the values and behaviors embedded in the project’s conceptual design.
- **The results of the demonstration will guide the development of an integrated workforce system to better serve the employers and empowerment zone residents of the Lower Rio Grande Valley.**

KEY ASSUMPTIONS

- Government-sponsored job-training, job-placement and employer-marketing programs have yielded limited results in making quality employment opportunities available to many individuals. More and more often, employers are filling their quality jobs through internal promotions and private recruitment efforts.
- Global competition and other market forces are forcing employers to move away from competitive procurement/multiple supplier relationships to more stable arrangements with a limited number of dependable, high-quality suppliers.
- Access to quality jobs comes from building such relationships between quality employers and quality suppliers of human-resources/labor-market services.
- There are high-quality, high-wage jobs available in the Valley that require some postsecondary training but less than a baccalaureate degree.
- Large numbers of unemployed and underemployed workers in the Valley could qualify for these high-quality jobs if they had the opportunity and financial means to undertake intensive, long-term training.
- Building “quality supplier/purchasing agent” relationships in order to bring quality jobs within the reach of low-income residents requires new institutional arrangements that facilitate access.
- Without such arrangements and the means to take advantage of them, an increasing number of Valley residents will continue to have lower incomes and greater dependence on various forms of public and private assistance throughout their lives.
- The Valley’s ability to attract new employers, particularly high value-added manufacturers paying living wages, depends on the education and skills of the region’s indigenous workforce. Current education and skill levels of Valley residents put the area at a disadvantage in attracting and retaining these employers.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

- A market-driven approach that recognizes employers as the primary customers and establishes ongoing relationships with them based on the project's responding effectively to their human-resources needs.
- Industry-based training that organizes employers by industry group to determine the occupational training areas, set the skills standards, participate in curriculum design and oversee the quality of training provided.
- Intensive, long-term training and related employment services that adequately prepare individuals for high-skill, high-wage jobs offering reasonable prospects of career advancement, increased earnings and sustained employment.
- Training that targets only those occupational areas with existing or projected job vacancies and a high probability of employment after completion.
- A strong community-support network for all those participating in long-term training that establishes a continuing relationship between each participant and the local community of mutual responsibility and accountability for achieving a positive outcome.
- Access to a range of labor-market services and training based on an individual's need for assistance and ability to benefit rather than on his/her economic circumstances.
- Maximum customer participation and informed decision making in all phases of the project, including a mutually negotiated outreach, intake and enrollment process as well as individual referral to the available education and training services.
- Client-centered service that demands individual accountability, empowers participants to take responsibility for their lives and diminishes their dependence on public or private assistance.
- A strong commitment to providing the necessary support services and financial assistance that allows individuals to participate in and satisfactorily complete long-term training.

- An integrated service delivery system modeled on a one-stop, customized approach that offers easy access, maximum flexibility and services tailored to the needs of employers and individuals seeking assistance.
- Job placements that arise from relationships which develop over time between project staff and local employers.

PROJECT GOALS AND SUCCESS MEASURES

Project Goals

- To demonstrate that higher levels of investment in individuals will yield higher returns, measured in both economic and social-welfare terms.
- To demonstrate that providing individualized services and quality workers to employers in response to their business needs will increase the number of quality job opportunities available to the target population.
- To develop and test a one-stop approach to service delivery that can be carried over into an integrated workforce-delivery system serving the four-county area.

Success Measures

- At least 80 percent of those enrolled in occupational skills training will successfully complete their training.
- At least 95 percent of those who successfully complete such training will find full-time employment.
- At least 90 percent of the successful completers will work continuously and remain full-time employees 26 weeks after placement at an average annualized wage rate that equals \$16,640 (\$8.00 per hour times 2080 hours).
- The ratio of aggregate annualized earnings to total program expenditures will be at least 1.7 to 1.
- The numbers of industry groups, participating employers and occupational areas targeted for long-term training and the average wage at placement for those successfully completing such training will increase over the duration of the project.

- The demographics (age, sex, race/ethnicity) of those who complete skills training, find employment and remain working will be consistent with the characteristics of those who enroll in training.
- At least 65 percent of those completing direct employment services, i.e., structured career-exploration and/or job-search assistance programs, will find jobs within 90 days after completion of such services.

THE SERVICE FOCUS

Employers

- This demonstration project recognizes Valley employers as the primary customers of the workforce system and offers services to address the human-resources needs of employers in targeted industries participating in the demonstration.
- It will target industry groups—and selected employers within those industry groups—in the four-county area with actual or projected labor shortages in entry-level occupations paying at least \$7.50 per hour plus benefits, including health care.
- The project goal is to identify and provide training for occupations with wages that average at least \$8.00 per hour.
- Long-term training will be provided only in occupations that meet the above wage and benefits requirements and provide project participants clear opportunities for career advancement.
- The project will focus initially on developing effective supplier/purchasing agent relationships in three industry groups.

Target Population

- The primary target population for the demonstration will be low-income, underemployed or unemployed young adults with family responsibilities who reside in the Valley's empowerment zone and who:
 - have a high school diploma or GED and some work experience but are unable to earn incomes that bring economic self-sufficiency;
 - have barriers to employability that can be effectively addressed by a combination of services available through this project and the community social-services system;
 - can most likely develop the required skills within two years and;

- can reasonably be expected to obtain and retain employment as a result of the services provided.
- Other individuals who come to the project seeking assistance but are not candidates for long-term skills training will have access to labor-market information, job leads, placement assistance and referrals to other training and employment services in the community, as appropriate.
- A limited number in this latter group—depending on what arrangements can be made with the Texas Employment Commission (or its successor, the Texas Workforce Commission) or other education, job training and employment agencies in the local area—will have an opportunity to participate in structured career-exploration activities and job-search training and to receive career counseling and job placement services.

Geographic Area

- The outreach and recruitment efforts for the demonstration will focus on the empowerment subzones in the four county region with high concentrations of residents who fit the description of the target population.
- At least one career development center will serve as a centralized intake facility for the project. This center will be strategically located to be convenient and accessible to residents of the empowerment subzones targeted for the project's outreach and recruitment efforts. The project will begin with one center and expand as needed as additional resources become available.

COMPONENT DESCRIPTIONS

Overview

This demonstration project establishes and will test new labor-market strategies to reconnect low-income unemployed and underemployed young adults with quality jobs. It features a unique approach to engaging private employers, provides intensive skills training where appropriate and models an enhanced service delivery process based on a “one-stop shopping” approach designed to better serve both employers looking for qualified workers and individuals seeking a variety of labor-market services. As such, this demonstration represents a fundamental change in the way workforce services are planned and delivered in the Rio Grande Valley.

The demonstration will offer services encompassing the nine components that follow:

- Employer Services,
- Outreach, Recruitment and Referral,
- Intake, Services and Referral,
- Direct Employment Services,
- Short-term Customized Training
- Employability Development Planning for Long-Term Training,
- Personal Counseling,
- Participant Support and Maintenance, and
- Long-term Skills Training and Job Placement.

The major activities, service processes, staff and other resource requirements, and operating specifications for each of these components are described in the following sections. While staff and resource requirements for each component are clearly identified, the number of project staff is not specified in this design. Actual staffing requirements will depend on the level of project activity at any given time.

EMPLOYER SERVICES

Description

This is the lead service component of the demonstration. It recognizes private employers as the primary customers of the local workforce system and seeks to prove that government-funded employment and training programs can respond to their human-resources needs. Given that employers in any given industry group operate in similar competitive environments, different industry groups can be viewed as distinct market segments, each with specific human-resources needs that best can be met with services customized for that particular market segment/industry group.

This component models a government-funded training program that makes its primary customers active participants from the beginning, evaluating the need for training and helping design it. Where a need for skills training for entry-level occupations is identified, industry-based training committees will be organized and maintained to set skills standards and certification requirements and develop specifications for curriculum design.

This approach represents a radical departure from the job-development and placement efforts of traditional employment and training programs, which use tax credits and wage-subsidy schemes to entice employers to hire individuals who have problems finding and keeping jobs.

Major Activities

- (1) Identify labor shortages; target occupations and industry groups for skills training and job placement.
- (2) Identify and recruit employers in each industry group; market project services.
- (3) Develop relationships with employers in each targeted industry group; identify and address their human-resources needs.
- (4) When long-term skills training is an appropriate solution to verified labor shortages in an industry:
 - organize an industry training committee;
 - define the core competencies, skills standards and certification requirements, and set curriculum specifications for the occupations targeted for training; and
 - identify/certify training curriculum and providers, and schedule and monitor the training.
- (5) Monitor the local labor market on an ongoing basis to identify emerging labor shortages; target occupations, industries and employers; market project services; identify employer needs; organize additional industry training committees.

The Service Process

(1) *Identify labor shortages, and target occupations and industry groups.*

- Project staff will use statistical and analytical information on the local labor market to identify current or projected labor shortages in occupational areas and industry groups that meet the minimum standards as of the demonstration.

(Primary sources include the State Occupational Information Coordinating Committee [SOICC], particularly the labor-market data available from SOCRATES; the Economic, Research and Analysis Division of the Texas Employment Commission (or its successor, the Texas Workforce Commission); Interlink, the regional quality workforce planning group in the north-central region; and those local industry associations and employers that make labor force projections.)

- Project staff will test the validity of this statistical information through interviews with local employers, employer groups, economic development experts and other knowledgeable individuals and make adjustments as necessary to reflect local labor-market realities.
- After consulting with the project's policy steering committee, staff will target employers in three industry groups for project services. Other industry groups will be added over time and as additional resources become available.

(2) *Identify and recruit employers, and market project services.*

- Project staff will identify a limited number of leading employers in each targeted industry group which are experiencing labor shortages in the targeted occupational areas. Initially, staff will focus on those employers large enough to have well-structured occupational areas with clearly defined points of entry and identifiable career paths offering workers good prospects for advancement.

(Priority should go to those employers which have transformed themselves into high-performance work organizations. They are most likely to recognize the benefits of a highly skilled, broadly trained workforce and participate in the demonstration.)

- Members of the project's policy advisory committee (at least one employer and one representative of Valley Interfaith) and project staff will meet individually with the chief executives of the targeted firms to explain the demonstration project, introduce its services, verify labor shortages in the targeted occupations and solicit a commitment to use project services.
- Based on these meetings, project staff and the policy advisory committee will select a lead employer for each industry group and develop a list of other employers which might be interested in project services.

(Interested employers will be screened on the basis of the wages and benefits they offer workers, particularly those in occupations targeted for long-term skills training; their level of current investment in skills training for front-line workers; and their commitment to providing long-term employment opportunities for training graduates.)

- The lead employer in each targeted industry group will market project services to other employers in the group with help from the project director and the appropriate employment services broker.

(Wage subsidy schemes, tax credits, on-the-job training contracts or appeals to potential employers' sense of social responsibility **will not be used** as techniques to market any of the project's services. Such approaches tend to devalue the service and signal an inferior good.)

(3) *Develop relationships with employers and identify human-resources needs.*

- Employer services brokers will build relationships with employers in each targeted industry group based on the project's ability to provide high-quality human-resources services that directly relate to their business strategies and operating requirements.

(Employer services should include providing or arranging training for incumbent workers; testing the interests, aptitudes and skills of current employees; recruiting, testing, screening and referring qualified applicants for current or projected job openings; performing job and task analysis and providing job restructuring

assistance; and customizing skills training for prospective employees to industry specifications.)

- The “quality supplier/purchasing agent” relationships established with employers in the targeted industry groups will help project staff identify and verify existing and projected labor shortages that could best be addressed with project services, including long-term skills training.

(4) *When long-term skills training is an appropriate solution to verified labor shortages in an industry:*

Organize an industry training committee

- When a need for occupational skills training of new workers has been identified/verified, the appropriate employer services broker will help those employers in the industry group with similar training needs to organize an industry-based training committee.

Define core competencies, skill standards and certification requirements, and set curriculum specifications

- The training committee will define the core educational competencies, skills standards and certification requirements for each occupational area targeted for training by the industry group.

(This approach makes employers in each industry group full partners from the outset in the design and implementation of training. It establishes an environment where employers and training providers share a vision of what they want to accomplish and make a joint commitment to resolve any problems that arise.)

- A separate training committee will be established for each industry group selected for occupational skills training. These committees will draw heavily on the resources of participating employers and local training institutions. They will interview employees working in the targeted occupations to identify the current job tasks and skills requirements. Supervisors of these employees will work with professional curriculum specialists from local training institutions to translate these job responsibilities and performance requirements into a set of knowledge, skills and behaviors required for effective job performance and successful employment. These

competencies/skills profiles for each targeted occupation will reflect those requirements common to all employers on the training committee.

- Employer services brokers will provide technical and logistical support for each industry training committee with assistance from a core group of occupational skills specialists.

(Once the benefits of an industry-based approach to occupational training have been demonstrated, these training committees may well become self-sustaining entities financially supported by participating employers.)

Identify/certify training curriculum and providers, and schedule and monitor training

- Once the competencies/skills profile for an entry-level job has been developed and the curriculum specifications set, the appropriate industry training committee will solicit proposals for curriculum that meets those requirements.
- The training committee will review submitted proposals for their responsiveness to the requirements of the occupational profile and curriculum specifications and for the overall quality of training. If acceptable curricula are already available, the committee will certify all providers as legitimate training referrals. If acceptable curricula are not available, the committee will work with area training institutions offering closely related curricula to make the necessary modifications before certifying them.
- Employer services brokers will work with participating employers in each industry group and the appropriate training providers to develop hiring schedules, determine procedures for filling projected job openings and plan for recruitment and training.

(This step is essential to ensure that the supply of qualified training graduates will meet projected demand and to avoid oversupplying an occupational area and graduating trainees who cannot find jobs.)

- Once skills training is underway, the appropriate industry training committee will monitor training providers to ensure that they meet the requirements of the competencies/skills profile and provide quality services.

(5) *Monitor the local labor market on an ongoing basis.*

- Project staff will provide high-quality services to participating employers in each of the targeted industry groups throughout the demonstration period.
- In addition, staff will use the latest labor-market information available (both formal and informal) to identify potential labor shortages in expanding or emerging occupations in the local area that may present new opportunities for skills training. They will market services to the affected employers, identify needs for project services and assist interested employers in organizing industry training committees, as appropriate.
- As resources permit, project staff will increase the number of occupational areas targeted for skills training, the number of participating employers and the number of industry groups receiving project services.
- As needed, leaders of Valley Interfaith, members of the policy advisory committee and project staff will meet with local employers to verify additional labor shortages in occupations that meet project standards and secure employer commitments to participate in the demonstration. These efforts will be managed by project staff.

Project Staff and Other Resource Requirements

Successfully implementing this component of the demonstration will require integrating project staff, participating employers, community leaders and other resources.

- **Employer Services Brokers.** The project will employ a number of employer service brokers to develop effective working relationships with employers in the targeted industry groups. They will build these relationships not by soliciting job orders or by marketing various wage-subsidy schemes but by providing high-quality human-resources services that support employers' business plans and operational goals. Employer services brokers will function much like account executives, each one focusing on a number of employers in a single industry group. They will take the lead as staff contacts with participating employers.

- **Occupational Skills Specialists.** Project staff will include one or more occupational skills specialists responsible for assisting participating employers with job and task analysis, job restructuring, setting skills standards and developing customized training for targeted occupational areas. These specialists will work under the guidance of the appropriate employer services brokers to provide technical support to the various industry training committees as needed.
- **Industry Training Committees.** An industry training committee will be established for each industry group targeted for long-term occupational skills training. These employer-led committees will define core competencies and skills standards, set the specifications for curriculum design, certify the training curriculum and providers, and schedule and monitor the training.
- **Curriculum Development Specialists.** Each industry training committee will include at least one curriculum development specialist with experience developing training in occupational areas targeted by the committee. These experts will not be members of the project staff but will come from local training institutions or participating employers. They will provide technical assistance in setting the curriculum design specifications for each occupational area targeted for training.
- **Labor Market Analysts.** Project staff will draw on the technical expertise of local labor-market analysts to assist them in gathering and interpreting labor-market information, particularly industry employment trends reflecting actual or projected labor shortages.
- **Valley Interfaith.** Leaders of Valley Interfaith will continue their efforts to contact local employers, identify labor shortages in occupations that meet project standards and secure employer commitments to use project services. They will make these contacts in concert with local elected officials, employer members of the policy advisory committee and project staff.

Operating Specifications

(1) *Functions and structure of the industry training committees*

- Industry training committees will be organized for each industry group receiving occupational skills training. They will function as ongoing committees and meet regularly throughout the demonstration.

Functions of the committee

- Define knowledge and skills competencies, job performance requirements and sets of desired behavioral traits for each occupation targeted for skills training.

(In cases of occupations with established skills standards, educational competencies and certification requirements, the industry training committees will review and validate the existing requirements or enhance them as necessary to meet the minimum standards of participating employers.)

- Set specifications for the design of training curriculum for each occupation receiving skills training.

For occupations with an existing formal curriculum:

- Review the competencies and job performance standards reflected in the curriculum to determine their appropriateness to the previously specified competencies and skills standards;
- Verify that the existing curriculum offers sufficient general skills training to ensure trainees' future upward mobility and meets the requirements of available entry-level jobs; and
- Review, request any necessary modifications and approve the curriculum as well as certify that training providers are appropriate for individuals whose training is funded through the demonstration project.

For occupations without a formalized curriculum:

- Set specifications for what the curriculum must incorporate, i.e., the specific knowledge, skills and behaviors, critical instructional methods and/or equipment, teacher qualifications and teacher/student ratios;
 - Solicit and review proposed training curricula for each occupational area from local providers; and
 - Certify curricula and training providers that meet specifications.
- Continually verify the links between training activities and employer needs, i.e., will the number and planned completion dates of individuals being training in each occupational area meet participating employers' anticipated hiring schedules?
 - Oversee the education and training provided in the classroom and on the job to ensure that they maintain standards of quality and meet specifications.
 - Modify education and skill requirements and curriculum specifications as necessary to reflect changes in the job performance requirements of each targeted occupation.
 - Identify new occupational areas for skills training.

Membership structure

- One representative from each participating employer in the industry group who has knowledge of the employer's training needs.

(This representative should be the director of operations, the production manager or another high-level manager who has firsthand knowledge of the employer's shifting priorities and who can make commitments on the company's behalf to participate in the demonstration and hire qualified graduates.)

- Supervisors in each occupational area targeted for training.

(These individuals will serve as temporary members of the committee, rotating on and off as the training emphasis shifts from one occupational area to another. They will bring specific skills and information regarding the occupation they supervise.)

- Workers employed in the occupational area or their representatives, as appropriate.

(The individual workers or representatives involved will also vary as the training interests of the committee shift.)

- At least one curriculum development specialist for each occupational area targeted for training.
- A representative of Valley Interfaith, if the organization so chooses.

(2) *Criteria for targeting occupations and employers for long-term skills training*

- Verified labor shortages offering full-time employment that are not due to poor working conditions as reflected by consistently high turnover rates.
- Entry-level wages of no less than \$7.50 per hour plus fringe benefits that include health care.
- Skills proficiencies that require at least nine months but not more than two years of structured skills training beyond high school.
- Opportunities for advancement, including established career ladders that offer significant opportunities for entry-level workers to move up in the organization.
- Employers with labor shortages in occupations that meet the above criteria which agree to work together in industry groups to design training.

(3) *General requirements for selecting skills-training providers*

- Industry training committees must take the lead in developing and recommending objective criteria for selecting and certifying education and training providers in each targeted occupational area.
- Once developed, the selection and certification criteria must be approved first by the policy advisory committee as part of the operational planning phase of the project and subsequently by the private industry council. At a minimum, the criteria must include those required by the private industry council for Job Training Partnership Act funds and address other qualitative factors, including:
 - the training provider's accreditation from nationally or regionally recognized entities;
 - stability of the training institution in terms of length of time in the local area;
 - the institution's graduation/completion rates, i.e., the number of individuals enrolled versus the number who complete training; and
 - the success of the institution's graduates in the labor market, particularly in the occupational areas targeted for training.
- These requirements are not intended to preclude the development of industry-based consortia to provide skills training when viable alternatives do not exist or cannot be developed in a reasonable period of time.

(4) *Technical criteria for approving training curricula*

- Curriculum must address all core education and skills competencies of the occupation targeted for training.
- Competencies must be relevant to the requirements of every employer in the industry group.
- Curriculum must be competency-based and include methods for measuring its attainment in objective terms.
- Curriculum must reflect the principles of effective adult learning and incorporate techniques of experiential learning.

- A computer-based, self-paced approach to training must be used to the maximum extent possible.
- The training curriculum must provide enrollees adequate opportunities to practice and demonstrate the skills and behaviors being developed.
- Training providers must use materials and equipment comparable with those currently used by participating employers.
- Training providers must have a maximum class size of 20 and/or a participant-to-instructor ratio of 10 to 1.

(5) *Examples of acceptable long-term skills-training arrangements*

- Classroom instruction coupled with appropriate workshop/clinical training of a certified curriculum at a postsecondary training institution (e.g., a community college, technical institute or nursing school) that leads to an associate degree or postsecondary certification widely recognized by industry.
- Competency-based training combining classroom and work components provided by a training center operated by a consortium of participating employers in an industry group. Though a single employer may serve as the “training employer” under this arrangement, the training must address job-performance requirements common to all participating employers in the consortium.
- A structured program certified by the appropriate industry training committee that includes a mix of classroom training provided by an approved training institution and on-the-job training provided by one or more employers in the industry group. Under this arrangement, a trainee may be hired by an employer in the industry group early in his/her training program if the job is part of an industry-approved sequence of training that culminates in promotion to a job that meets project criteria **and** in either an associate degree or postsecondary certification widely recognized by employers in the industry group. The completion of training, certification and job promotion must occur within two years of the individual’s enrollment in training.
- Informal, unstructured training in a work place setting will not qualify as training or work-based learning for purposes of this demonstration.

(6) *Scope of training activities*

- The project will develop occupational training opportunities within three or more industry groups during the first year of the demonstration and within two or more additional industry groups in the second year. (The project should not be held strictly to this requirement, however, if all its resources are consumed by successful training programs in only one or two industry groups.)

(7) *Limits on using project funds for training incumbent workers*

- Project funds which underwrite skills training for incumbent workers must result in the direct creation of additional job opportunities for other project participants. Employers must be willing to make available at least one high-quality, entry-level job for every two incumbent workers whose skills are successfully upgraded.
- Any project funds which support the training and retraining of incumbent workers must be matched dollar-for-dollar by those employers which directly benefit from such training.

OUTREACH, RECRUITMENT AND REFERRAL

Description

This component of the project deals with identifying and recruiting residents of the the empowerment area's subzones who need long-term skills training to find jobs that provide economic self-sufficiency. Need is not, however, the only consideration. Outreach and recruitment activities will also focus on identifying individuals who are interested in pursuing long-term skills training, willing to participate, committed to completing such training and able to develop the required skills within two years.

Outreach teams made up of recognized community leaders will provide information about all services available through the project as well as through other education, employment and social-service agencies, meet with interested individuals and make referrals to the project or other providers, as appropriate. Team members will explain the origin of the project, the unique opportunities it offers individuals in the community, the personal commitment required of those who enroll, and the importance of the project's success to the community.

Those referred to the project for long-term skills training will begin working with staff at the project's career development center to determine whether training available through the project fits their interests, aptitudes and skill levels.

While this component focuses on finding qualified candidates for the skills-training opportunities developed through the employer services component outlined previously, the outreach teams are sure to encounter individuals whose immediate interest is in finding a job, not enrolling in training. They, too, will be referred to the project's career development center, where they will receive basic labor-market information, job leads and other direct employment services.

Major Activities

- (1) Organize community-based outreach teams and recruit potential project participants.
- (2) Refer interested individuals to the project's career development center or to other, more appropriate services available elsewhere in the community.

The Service Process

(1) *Organize community-based outreach teams and recruit participants.*

- The project's outreach and recruitment efforts will focus on the empowerment subzones in Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr and Willacy counties.
- Valley Interfaith will establish outreach points strategically located to best serve the residents of each targeted subzone.
- Three-member community support teams made up of recognized community leaders identified by Valley Interfaith will provide outreach, recruitment and referral services at each site, as needed.
- Project staff will develop and disseminate fliers and/or brochures describing the project and its services through the community support teams and other education, training, employment and social-service agencies serving residents of the targeted subzones.

(These materials will introduce the project, its goals and available services and briefly describe the occupational areas where skills training is being offered, employer hiring requirements for those occupations, the minimum requirements for getting into training, the types of individuals targeted for skills training and ideal candidates for training.)

- Project staff and leaders of Valley Interfaith will provide the initial orientation for each community-support team as well as ongoing information, training and logistical support. In addition, they will brief team members and their alternates on other education, training, employment and social services in the community and how to access them. Each team member and alternate will also be trained in effective interviewing and provided regular updates on training and employment opportunities available through the project and other agencies.

- Members of the community support teams will meet with interested individuals to provide information about the project and other services available in the community, conduct structured interviews (30-45 minutes each) with those demonstrating a strong interest in receiving services and make referrals to the career development center or other providers, as appropriate. Everyone interviewed will be offered:
 - information about the project, its goals and services, including the direct employment services available to those not interested in skills training;
 - information on occupational areas where training is available through the project, including employers' entry-level hiring requirements;
 - the minimum requirements for entry into skills training for each occupational area;
 - the name and phone number of a contact person and the location of the career development center; or
 - referrals to other agencies if he/she is not interested in long-term skills training or other project services, or if project services are not appropriate.
- Interviewers will give those individuals who seem to be prime candidates for long-term skills training a referral form indicating this and a list of information they should bring to the career development center. Also, the interviewing team will notify promptly the manager of the career development center about all such referrals. In turn, the manager will assign a client advocate to contact each referred individual in order to schedule a time for his/her initial meeting at the center.
- Each individual referred to the career development center and subsequently scheduled to enter long-term skills training will have a second interview with the appropriate community-support team prior to enrollment.

(At this interview—step 5 in the employability development planning component described later—team members will describe the project's origins, clarify the community's commitment and expectations, explain the applicant's concomitant responsibilities to the community, explain the importance of the project's success to the community, and make a final assessment of the applicant's

interest and probability of success in long-term training. At this point in the process, a mentoring relationship will be established between the applicant and one or more members of the community-support team that should continue throughout and beyond the individual's involvement in the project. The results of this meeting will be shared with the appropriate client advocate and will be an important consideration in the final enrollment decision.)

(2) *Refer individuals to the career development center or other local providers.*

- Individuals meeting with a community-support team and demonstrating a strong interest in education, training and employment-related services will be referred to the career development center (as detailed above) or to other service providers in the local community, as appropriate.

Project Staff and Other Resource Requirements

Project staff and volunteers required to successfully implement this component of the demonstration are described below.

- **Community Support Teams.** Three-member community support teams based at Valley Interfaith's outreach points will provide outreach, recruitment and referral services for the project. These teams will work closely with representatives of their targeted subzones to share information and recruit interested individuals. While their main focus will be finding candidates for long-term skills training, the teams will also recruit individuals for any immediate employment opportunities identified by project staff and make referrals to other education, training, employment and social-service agencies, as appropriate. Team members and alternates will volunteer their time and services. The teams will function as needed to meet the needs of the career development center and participating employers (see below).
- **Volunteer Services Coordinator.** The project will employ a well-qualified and experienced volunteer services coordinator to manage the community support teams and oversee the outreach, recruitment and referral services they provide. This person will be responsible for orienting and training all team members and alternates and for providing the teams with ongoing technical and logistical support to ensure that the number of individuals entering training will meet

employer needs throughout the demonstration period. Carrying out these responsibilities may or may not be a full-time job, depending on the level of project activity. If a full-time position is not warranted, these responsibilities should be assigned to one of the career development center's client advocates or to the project's support services broker, depending on the skills and experience of the individuals in these positions. (The roles of client advocates and the support services broker are described in further detail in the next three components.)

Operating Specifications

(1) *Limited responsibility of the community support teams*

- The community support teams are made up of volunteers. They will not be responsible for determining an individual's eligibility for various federal and state programs or for making final decisions regarding who receives project services. Their role is to provide information, assess the interest and commitment of individuals interested in long-term skills training, make appropriate referrals, make recommendations to project staff and serve as mentors for those subsequently enrolled in training. All final decisions regarding an individual's eligibility for and receipt of project services will be made by project staff.

(2) *The service focus*

- While the project targets low-income, underemployed or unemployed young adults with family responsibilities residing in the targeted subzones, the career development center may also serve a limited number of individuals who meet the target criteria but live outside these areas.
- Everyone interested in the project will be given information, but not everyone will be served. Some individuals will not be a good match for project services while others—even those who might otherwise be eligible—may be denied service because of funding constraints or because employers' needs have already been met (see below).

3) *Applicant and participant flow*

- Outreach and recruitment for specific skills-training opportunities should not begin until labor shortages requiring such training have been verified, industry training committees established and the appropriate training programs identified or developed. The number of training slots available through the project will be a function of the number of training opportunities developed among participating employers at any given time.
- The flow of applicants and trainees must be carefully managed at all times to coincide with employer hiring plans and the schedules of training providers to avoid raising expectations, creating bottlenecks and needlessly frustrating applicants, trainees, project staff and employers.

INTAKE, SERVICES AND REFERRAL

Description

This component reflects the project's *services first* philosophy, which seeks to address individuals' employment needs within the contexts of their daily lives and urgent needs. It offers immediate services to those who get referred by the community support teams or walk into the career development center on their own. It ensures that their pressing needs for information, counseling, crisis management, emergency financial assistance or other services will be addressed before they are subjected to the standard processing activities (e.g., program orientation, eligibility determination or needs assessment) that normally precede the provision of services in public job-training programs. Only after these needs have been met will project staff discuss employment-related services, including long-term skills training, or make referrals to other providers in the community, as appropriate.

Major Activities

- (1) Determine the individual's immediate needs for assistance.
- (2) Provide information, counseling, stress management or financial assistance to address those immediate needs.
- (3) Determine the individual's employment goals and offer access to the project's direct employment or other services, or referrals to additional education, training, employment or social-service providers in the immediate area.

The Service Process

(1) *Determine immediate service needs.*

- Each individual who is referred to the career development center for services or walks in on his/her own will meet one-on-one with a client advocate. The client advocate will initiate an informal conversation to make the individual feel comfortable and begin a general but unobtrusive assessment designed to:
 - determine the individual's present situation;
 - identify any immediate needs for services that must be addressed before the individual will be able to benefit from the employment and training services that may be available through the center; and
 - identify his/her immediate employment goals.

(2) *Provide information, counseling, stress management, financial assistance to address immediate needs.*

- Based on the needs identified during this initial conversation, the client advocate will provide information and services to temporarily stabilize the individual's situation or make an immediate referral to other services available at the center, through other public or private agencies or from individuals in the community.

(The client advocate's first obligation is to provide services to address the individual's immediate needs. He/she will not present a lengthy description of the project and its services, gather information on the individual's eligibility for various government programs, start a formal case file or attempt to enroll the individual in any project activity or service.)

- Services available at this stage in the process will address individuals' immediate needs rather than any intractable problems requiring more intensive, long-term intervention. They will include information,

personal or family counseling, crisis intervention, stress management, career counseling, emergency financial assistance or other social services, as needed.

(These services may be available at the career development center or through referrals to other employment and social-service providers in the community. Church congregations affiliated with Valley Interfaith will also be included as sources for these services. To the maximum extent feasible, these services will be available on site and funded from a variety of sources.)

(3) *Determine employment goals and offer access to project services or referrals to other education, training, employment and social-service providers.*

- Once these immediate needs for assistance have been addressed and the individual's situation stabilizes, further consideration will be given to meeting the employment and training needs of those interested.
- Individuals looking for a job but not interested in long-term skills training will have immediate access to the project's direct employment services. Those interested in long-term skills training will be scheduled for diagnostic testing, in-depth needs assessments, career exploration, counseling, eligibility determination and related services described later in the employability development component. Those with needs that cannot be met with available project services will be referred to other providers in the area.

Project Staff and Other Resource Requirements

- **Client Advocates.** Project staff will include a number of client advocates who will function as single points of contact for individuals coming into the center. They are responsible for addressing individual's immediate needs directly or through referrals to other project staff or other service providers, as necessary. Once the immediate needs of individuals have been addressed, client advocates will work with those who are interested to help them identify and access the services they need to become employable. (The further responsibilities of client advocates are described in later components.)
- **Personal Counselors.** Project staff will include one or more personal counselors to work with the client advocates as needed to deal with any immediate and

pressing personal issues that must be addressed before an individual's labor-market needs can be effectively met.

Operating Specifications

(1) *The career development center*

- A single career development center will be centrally located and easily accessible to residents of the targeted subzones. It will be housed in a professional building with adequate off-street parking. It will have well-lighted, well-appointed offices and a professional staff. It will have the appearance of a place where something positive can happen for those coming through its doors.
- All the project's "front-end" services (i.e., intake, assessment, testing, counseling, eligibility determination, case management, and job-search and referral services) will be located at the center as will support services, when possible. Developmental services such as basic education and skills training will be arranged through the center but not provided on site.
- All project staff will work at the center.

(2) *Universal eligibility for services*

- The services offered in this component will be available to everyone seeking assistance through the career development center regardless of income level or labor-market status.

DIRECT EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Description

This component is designed to provide short-term, intensive employment-related services for individuals who feel they are qualified for existing job openings in Valley labor markets and need only information and minimal assistance to find a job. This component offers access to labor-market information and job matching services, and limited amounts of career counseling, job-search training and placement assistance. To the extent feasible, these services will be offered through computer-assisted self-help models that encourage individuals to take responsibility for their own employment and require a minimum of project resources.

Ideally, these services will be available at the career development center. The mix and level of services and where they are actually provided, however, will be determined by a number of factors, including the relative costs of the various service options, the quality and appropriateness of similar services available in the community and the types of arrangements that can be developed with other providers, specifically the regions local workforce development boards and the Texas Employment Commission (or its successor, the Texas Workforce Commission).

Major Activities

- (1) Utilize a computer-assisted job-matching service that relies heavily on the existing capability of the Texas Employment Commission (or its successor, the Texas Workforce Commission).
- (2) Assist with self-assessment and career exploration.
- (3) Develop an employment strategies plan.
- (4) Provide job-search training and self-directed job-search assistance.
- (5) Offer job-placement assistance.

The Service Process

(1) *Utilize computer-assisted job matching services.*

- Individuals coming into the career development center will have immediate and unrestricted access to job information/job-matching services that rely heavily on the computerized job bank maintained by the Texas Employment Commission (or its successor, the Texas Workforce Commission) and other sources of labor-market information available in the community. These services, designed for job seekers who feel they are qualified for existing job openings in the Valley labor markets, will be available through a self-help model that requires a minimum of project resources and staff time.

(One area of the career development center will be clearly identified as the jobs information/resources center. Individuals will be made aware of its existence when they enter the center and will have access to its information and services without having to sign in, provide personal information or go through a formal processing activity of any kind. Client advocates will serve as resource persons in the jobs center on a rotating schedule. One client advocate will be responsible for keeping information and resource materials up-to-date and for ensuring that quality service is provided.)

(2) *Assist with self-assessment and career exploration.*

- Those individuals seeking more specialized services will complete a self-assessment of interests, aptitudes, skills and transferability of previous work experience and then meet with a client advocate to schedule a mix of activities and services most likely to result in immediate employment. Depending on the interests and needs of the individual, a typical service sequence might include an exploration of current job openings and career opportunities, limited career counseling, the identification of immediate employment goals and an evaluation of employment-related needs.
- Once the self-assessment process is completed, client advocates will schedule a series of career exploration activities designed to give individuals maximum exposure to jobs and occupational areas of high interest. These self-directed activities will incorporate interactive videos, work samples, descriptive reading materials, informational interviews with employers, employer presentations at the center, site visits and, where possible, limited job shadowing opportunities. As a result of this exposure, individuals will be

expected to choose at least three occupational areas in which to concentrate their job-search activities.

(3) *Develop an employment strategies plan.*

- Using information gathered from the self-assessment exercise and career exploration activities, client advocates will work with individuals to map out an employment strategies plan—a specific plan of action that addresses their individual interests and needs and is most likely to lead to immediate employment.

(The employment strategies plan is not an elaborate document. It is a mutually agreed to schedule of activities and services designed to support an individual's search for a job. It effectively links the appropriate job-search training, self-directed job-search activities and job placement services, as needed, to address identified needs.)

- A completed and mutually agreed to employment strategies plan will constitute enrollment in job-search training and assistance activities available through the project.

(4) *Provide job-search training and self-directed job-search assistance.*

- Job seekers will be expected to attend regularly scheduled job-search training workshops and actively participate in self-directed job-search activities consistent with their employment strategies plans. These activities will be specific to individuals' needs and designed to provide them with the tools they need to take primary responsibility for their own job searches, including techniques for developing and maintaining ongoing peer support groups.
- Project staff will employ a three-part service approach that combines small-group workshops, one-on-one counseling and guidance sessions, and assistance in developing job-search networks and ongoing peer-support groups.

(Job-search training and assistance will be provided in formats and at times that are both appropriate and convenient for those seeking assistance. The center will offer or arrange for workshops covering a wide range of related topics, including life skills, stress management, financial management, building self esteem, using

labor-market information, enhancing generic workplace skills, developing informal job-search networks, researching prospective employers, résumé preparation, completing applications, effective interviewing, and organizing and maintaining support groups for ongoing job-search activities.)

- Project staff will regularly monitor the progress of those participating in job-search training and related activities to offer encouragement and provide limited one-on-one career counseling services to help job seekers stay focused on productive job-search activities.
- Logistical support for ongoing job-search activities will be available at the jobs information center. To the extent feasible, individual job seekers will have ready access to newspapers, trade journals, job-hunting guides, labor-market information, America's job bank via the Internet, telephones, word processors, a fax machine and mailing privileges. Limited clerical assistance may also be made available, depending on resource availability.

(5) *Offer job-placement assistance.*

- Job-placement assistance will be provided on a limited basis. It might include information on current or potential job opportunities and referrals, where appropriate to job openings listed with the project by specific employers.

(In addition to the normal channels for such information—the classified ads, job listings with the Texas Employment Commission (or its successor, the Texas Workforce Commission) and employer contacts made by Valley Interfaith leaders—immediate job opportunities may be identified by the project's employer services brokers as they contact local employers.)

- Project staff will provide information, job matching and referral services that benefit both employers seeking applicants and individuals looking for jobs. To that end, project staff will ensure that only qualified applicants are referred to employers by testing and screening job seekers before making any referrals.

(To develop and ensure the project's reputation as a quality supplier of human resources, the job-placement service must rely on the employment services brokers to pass on accurate, up-

to-date information from participating employers regarding the education, skills levels, attitudes and behaviors they seek so that it refers only qualified applicants.)

Special Note: This step is the nexus of two different but related project services. By developing quality-supplier relationships with employers, project staff will identify job opportunities that can be filled by individuals looking for immediate employment. If done well, both customers—employers and workers—benefit, and the project gains status as a provider of quality services in the eyes of local employers.

- Those participating in the job-search and related activities of this component who are unable to find suitable employment due to a lack of skills will have the opportunity to apply for long-term training available through the project.

Project Staff and Other Resource Requirements

Only limited staff resources can be committed to providing the direct employment services envisioned here. Successfully implementing this component depends, therefore, on forging effective working relationships with service providers offering similar direct employment services, specifically the local workforce boards serving the region and local offices of the Texas Employment Commission (or its successor, the Texas Workforce Commission).

- **Client Advocates.** Client advocates will assist individuals in their self-assessment and initial career-exploration efforts, help them develop effective employment strategies plans, schedule job-search training and related self-directed job-search activities, and provide limited one-on-one counseling and job-placement assistance, as appropriate. They will also serve as resource persons in the jobs center.
- **Career Counselor.** A staff career counselor will support the client advocates' work by providing clients the latest career information, counseling services and placement assistance either one-on-one or in group settings.
- **Personal Counselors.** Personal counselors on staff will support the client advocates' efforts by providing clients limited counseling services on personal issues (i.e., building self-esteem, accepting responsibility and managing stress) that may be adversely affecting their employability.

- **Local Workforce Boards and/or the Texas Employment Commission (or its successor, the Texas Workforce Commission).** The job-training workshops—their number, frequency and range of topics—as well as the quality of the project’s self-directed job-search activities will depend on the arrangements negotiated between the project and the two key agencies currently providing direct employment services in the local area. Such arrangements, which are potentially cost effective for all parties, are absolutely essential to this component of the demonstration.
- **Employment Services Brokers.** These staff members will provide the latest information on job openings and employer requirements to the client advocates, and assist with the outreach, testing, screening and referral of qualified applicants to prospective employers.

Operating Specifications

(1) *Eligibility for and access to direct employment services*

- No eligibility or program application requirements will be imposed on individuals seeking the services identified in this component of the demonstration. Everyone will have equal access to the information and services available, regardless of income or labor-market status, but not everyone will receive the same type or level service. Unfortunately, many will not be served at all due to limited resources. Access to extensive career exploration activities, one-on-one counseling, and job-search training and assistance will be limited by the project’s funding constraints, so many seeking these staff- and resource-intensive services may not be served.

(2) *The jobs-information/resources center*

- The jobs information/resources center will be the focal point for the project's job-information/job-matching service. Texas Employment Commission (or its successor, the Texas Workforce Commission) computer terminals as well as newspapers, trade journals, job-hunting guides, career information and other labor-market information will be located here, readily accessible to everyone who wants to use it. This part of the career center should be quiet, well-appointed and separate from other service areas, with cubicles for privacy and a common space for reading and general information gathering.

(3) *Job-placement assistance*

- The project will only market qualified referrals to employers. It will not use on-the-job training contracts or wage-subsidy schemes, hold out the promise of tax credits or make appeals to employers' sense of social responsibility as techniques for developing jobs and placing individuals.

SHORT-TERM CUSTOMIZED TRAINING

Description

This component of the demonstration provides short-term customized training for Valley residents tailored to the needs of selected employers offering high-quality entry-level jobs with good opportunities for advancement. As envisioned here, such training will normally be provided over a two to fourth month period, depending on employer needs and the skill levels of residents.

Valley employers targeted for services from this component will be those with occupational areas projected to provide continuing employment and career opportunities for unemployed or underemployed residents seeking to improve their employment and earnings potentials. Local employers expanding their operations in the Valley as well as new employers considering locating manufacturing facilities in the region will be targeted for services.

The training services described here complements services available through other components of the demonstration—specifically the direct employment services described earlier and the long-term training services that follow this section. Adding short-term customized training as an option moves the demonstration closer to the full-service career development system envisioned in the state’s new workforce development laws.

Major Activities

- (1) Identify employers in targeted industries with labor shortages in selected high-skill, high wage occupations that can best be met through short-term customized training.
- (2) In concert with the prospective employer and a qualified training provider, identify the employer’s specific needs, determine the requisite education and skill requirements, and set curriculum specifications.
- (3) Develop the training program.
- (4) Conduct outreach, recruit, screen and refer individuals to training.
- (5) Monitor training to ensure quality.
- (6) Evaluate results.

The Service Process

(1) *Identify employers in targeted industries with labor shortages in selected high -skill, high-wage occupations that can best be met through short-term customized training.*

- In the process of marketing project services described earlier in the employer services component of this demonstration, staff will work closely with economic development groups throughout the Valley to ensure that project services, including short-term customized training, are part of the incentive package for attracting new businesses to the area. Staff will also ensure that information about all project services is available to financial institutions, local chambers of commerce and others involved in helping Valley employers expand and/or restructure their production processes.
- In this marketing effort, project staff will likely encounter individual employers or a groups of employers who express a need for a short-term customized training programs for prospective employees and show a strong interest in developing such training through the project.

(Before proceeding, project staff will validate the stated need for training. This will be done by using the outreach and intake components of the demonstration to identify Valley residents who may already have the education and skills needed by the prospective employer. If a sufficient number of qualified applicants meet the employer’s entry-level requirements for a given occupation, are available and are interested in employment with that employer, training will not be authorized.)

- If a need for training is demonstrated, project staff will meet with interested employers to explore the possibility and feasibility of developing short-term training to meet the identified need.
- Interested employers and the job opportunities they offer will be evaluated and prioritized in terms of the entry-level wages and fringe benefits they offer, working conditions, the prospects for continued employment in the occupational area, their stability and their commitment to providing further training and education for front-line workers.
- Project staff will work with high-priority employers to develop preliminary training proposals for consideration by the project’s board of directors.

(At a minimum, these proposals will include descriptions of the industry, the prospective employer and the entry-level occupation for which training is requested; estimates of the numbers of residents to be enrolled, trained and hired; evidence that individuals with the needed skills are not currently available in the Valley labor force; forecasts of the outlook for continued employment in the occupational area and the prospects for further training by the prospective employer; and finally, evidence that the training requested is not already being provided.)

- The board will review all preliminary training proposals and determine those to be fully developed for final consideration for project funding.

(The board should ensure that all short-term customized training funded through the project meets established criteria for such training and, to the extent possible, links the individuals trained with further training provided by the employer once the individual is on the job. **The board should also ensure that the interest in short-term customized training does not overshadow the project's primary objective of providing long-term training to Valley residents.** Furthermore, short-term training should not duplicate similar training already available in the Valley.)

- (2) *In concert with the prospective employer and a qualified training provider, identify the employer's specific needs, determine the requisite education and skill requirements and set curriculum specifications.*
 - Once the board has given approval for the development of a preliminary training proposal, project staff will work with the prospective employer to identify the specific education and skill requirements of the occupation targeted for training and develop specifications for the appropriate training curriculum.

- (3) *Develop the training program.*
 - Once the curriculum specifications are developed, project staff will schedule a meeting with all public and private training providers in the Valley to solicit proposed training designs, curriculum outlines, suggested approaches, teaching methods and estimated costs.

- Training providers interested in working with the employer and the project will submit curriculum proposals which will be evaluated by the participating employer and project staff and subsequently approved by the project's executive director.
- The training provider selected will then work with the employer and appropriate project staff to develop the detailed curriculum and final training proposal for board consideration. Under no circumstances will a training program be funded without board approval.
- If no existing training provider responds to the prospective employer's need, the training may be developed and provided by the employer itself. In cases where a group of employers needs the same kind of occupational training and no training provider responds adequately, a single member of the group may function as the training employer.

(4) *Conduct outreach, recruit, screen and refer individuals to training.*

- As the final training proposal is being developed, project staff will use the methods described earlier in the outreach and intake components of the demonstration to identify Valley residents who may be interested in short-term customized training and subsequent employment in the available occupational area.
- Project staff will assess each individual's interests, skills and aptitudes relative to the requirements of the occupational area. Although, this assessment will be similar to the one outlined in the direct employment services component, it will not be as extensive as that used in the employability development component for long-term training applicants.
- Project staff will augment these standard procedures with any special tests or screening criteria supplied by the prospective employer as long as such tests or criteria directly relate to the education and skill requirements of the targeted occupation. Staff may also involve a representative of the prospective employer in the screening and selection process.

(5) *Monitor training to ensure quality.*

- Project staff will make regular visits to the training sites and interview training instructors, students and prospective employers to ensure that the training being provided is consistent with curriculum design and that individual trainees are making satisfactory progress toward their completion as scheduled.

(6) *Evaluate results.*

- Project staff will review the results of each short-term customized training program. Staff members will systematically follow up on those trained and placed to evaluate their employment and earnings experience, document their access to additional employer-provided skills training and track their advancement.

Project Staff and Other Resource Requirements

- **Project Director.** The project director will serve as the primary point of contact with individual employers, local chambers of commerce and economic development groups to identify needs for short-term customized training, prioritize potential training opportunities and manage the development of training programs.
- **Employer Services Brokers.** Short-term customized training will be included as one of the services marketed to Valley employers by the project's employer services brokers. When identified, an employer's need for such training will be immediately communicated to the project director, who will then prioritize requests and select employers for further consideration. Employer services brokers will work with those employers to develop preliminary training proposals for further consideration. If these proposals are approved by the board, brokers will work directly with the project director and employers—and eventually with the selected training providers—to fully develop the training program for final action by the board.
- **Client Advocates.** Client advocates will work with the volunteer services coordinator and community support teams to provide Valley residents information on short-term training opportunities and to assess, screen and refer to training individuals with the interests, aptitudes and minimum education and skills requirements.

- **Community Support Teams.** The project’s community support teams will provide information on short-term training opportunities to residents of communities throughout the Valley. Teams will conduct outreach, recruit and refer individuals interested in such training to the project’s career development center.
- **Local Economic Development Councils.** Local economic development groups in the Valley will be encouraged to include the project’s short-term customized training option in their promotional and business recruitment literature. They will also assist project staff in communicating the availability of such training to Valley employers—those recently recruited to the area as well as long-standing employers considering expanding their operations in the area.

Operating Specifications

(1) *Eligibility requirements for occupations and individual employers*

- The project will focus on private-sector firms that are large enough to have structured occupational areas with clearly defined points of entry and identifiable career paths offering good prospects for advancement; have internal training programs for front-line, non-managerial workers, and are committed to providing training and development opportunities for their employees.
- The project will focus primarily, but not exclusively, on training for manufacturing jobs in the Valley with good prospects for future employment.
- There must be actual or projected job openings in the occupation in which training is to be provided. Training available through this project may not duplicate programs already available in the area.
- The occupational area in which training is provided must be identified in the latest “State Priority and Regional Targeted Occupations,” a list provided by the Quality Workforce Planning Unit at the Texas Education Agency. If a need for training is identified in a new or emerging occupation not listed, local employers must verify the actual or projected job openings and the project board must approve the occupational area prior to the development of a preliminary training proposal.

- Prospective employers must provide a letter of commitment to hire those individuals who complete the appropriate customized training program and meet the entry-level education and skill requirements identified by those employers before the training began.
- There must be a reasonable expectation those individuals trained through the project will find full-time employment for at least two years in the occupational area in which they are trained.
- Priority will be given to those employers willing to contribute one-half of the costs of providing the training either in cash or as in-kind contributions that can be clearly documented.

(2) *Resident eligibility*

- Training available through this component will be made available to residents throughout the Valley subject only to the federal or state requirements that may accompany the funding. For example, if empowerment zone funding is used to support a given project, participants – at least a significant portion of them – will have to be residents of one of the four delineated Valley subzones.
- In contrast to those participating in long-term training, individuals going into short-term customized training program will not be required to have high school diplomas or GEDs or to function at those levels as a condition for enrollment. They must, however, meet the minimum education and training requirements for the training program set by the prospective employer and possess sufficient skills to successfully participate in the prescribed training and develop the needed job skills within the training period. They must also be individuals who are likely to obtain and retain employment in the occupational area as a result of the training they receive.

(3) *Wage and employment standards*

- This component will target entry-level jobs that pay at least \$7.50 per hour or the prevailing wage for the occupation in the local labor market area, whichever is greater. They must provide fringe benefits that meet industry standards and include health insurance.

(A limited number of occupations paying less than \$7.50 but at least \$6.50 per hour may qualify for customized training provided through the project. These occupations must offer job opportunities with employers which provide structured on-the-job training and realistic opportunities for advancement in the occupational area so workers can earn at least \$7.50 per hour within one year of their initial hire. The customized training portion of the program must be linked with further training provided by the employer to ensure continued training and attainment of the wage goal once individuals are on the job.)

- Project funds will only be used to provide training in occupations offering full-time employment – defined as employed as 35 hours or more per week for at least six months in a calendar year.
- Federal funds will not be used to support short-term customized training in cases where an employer is relocating its work site within the area or from some other part of the state or nation to the Valley. This restriction may not apply to state or local funds, depending on the specific source of those funds and the associated requirements.

(4) *Types and quality of training allowed*

- Training funded as a part of this demonstration will focus on entry-level jobs at the bottom of clearly identifiable career ladders in private-sector firms offering good possibilities for advancement and opportunities for further education and training.
- The training will be designed to develop the basic education and technical skills required to do the job and help new employees move up the occupational ladder. Training will include English as a Second Language (ESL), basic computer literacy and “SCANS skills,” as appropriate.
- Training may be provided in work- or school-based settings or in some combination that best meets the training needs of the employer and the individuals being trained. It should include the appropriate mix of theoretical and practical training required for individuals to successfully perform on the job.

- To the extent practical, the training curriculum will include a combination of specific and general training designed to enhance workers' mobility within the firm or occupational area or among other employers in the Valley.
- Only well-structured, competency-based training guided by a training curriculum that requires trainees to perform tasks of increasing difficulty will be approved for project funding.

(These last two requirements are designed to ensure that training paid for with public resources provides more than a subsidized employment experience for trainees and participating employers.)

(4) *Training cost, funding and accountability for performance*

- The cost of short-term customized training supported through this demonstration shall be comparable to that of similar training provided by public institutions or private employers in the area.
- To maximize training effectiveness and minimize costs, the classroom or school-based portion of the training should be provided by well-established local institutions using existing facilities. Arrangements will have to vary with the employer and occupational area. In all cases, however, employers should be encouraged to provide state-of-the-art equipment and, where appropriate, instructors to provide the necessary training.

[While no project funds should be spent on equipment, other direct costs normally associated with training (i.e., tuition, books and supplies) can be covered as necessary. This should not in any way discourage project staff from working out shared-costs arrangements with employers to conserve scarce project resources where possible.]

- Participating employers will be expected to pay wages to any individuals for any on-the-job training they receive. Project funds or project-generated funds will not be used to pay trainee wages.

EMPLOYABILITY DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Description

The activities of this component deal with identifying individuals who both need long-term training to enhance their employability and have the basic education, interests, aptitudes and level of commitment necessary to successfully complete one of the demonstration's skills-training programs. Together, the activities and service process outlined here will lead project staff and applicants through a structured information-gathering, assessment, counseling, planning and decision-making process to determine the feasibility of enrolling an applicant in long-term training and the probability of his/her success. Over the long term, following these steps to match applicants and available training will ensure more appropriate training for those enrolled, provide participating employers with workers who are better suited to their needs and reduce dropout rates among trainees.

By design, this process includes numerous opportunities for assessment and decision making by both applicants and project staff. As this matching process unfolds, attrition rates among applicants will undoubtedly be high. Few are likely to complete the process and enroll in long-term training. Those not going on to skills training will be referred to more appropriate services at the project or in the community.

Please note that some steps in the service process may be collapsed to make it more orderly, efficient and customer-friendly.

Major Activities

- (1) Conduct initial interview, provide a basic orientation and begin the assessment process.
- (2) Determine eligibility for assistance.
- (3) Provide intensive career exploration.
- (4) Test and assess basic skills, interests and aptitudes.
- (5) Refer to a community support team.

- (6) Draft an employability development plan.
- (7) Enroll in the project.

The Service Process

(1) *Conduct initial interview, provide a basic orientation and begin the assessment process.*

- Individuals expressing a strong interest in skills training will be scheduled for an initial one-on-one interview with a client advocate to exchange information, receive a basic project orientation and begin the assessment process which will culminate in the individual's enrolling in skills training or being referred to more appropriate services.

(This interview will be a brief, get-acquainted session limited to no more than an hour, when a client advocate will identify himself/herself as the applicant's single point of contact. Those demonstrating a continuing interest will receive a basic orientation at this meeting or another scheduled time. For those who subsequently participate in long-term skills training, this initial meeting will mark the beginning of an ongoing case management/counseling relationship with a client advocate that will continue throughout their involvement with the project.)

- At the orientation, applicants for will receive an overview of the project, its staff and the services potentially available, a general introduction to the occupational areas where skills training is currently available (i.e., types of jobs, wages and working conditions, prospective employers in the local area and employer expectations), and a brief description of the local training institutions where the required training is offered. They will be given an orientation packet containing this information. The packet will also include a written statement outlining what the community expects of participants and summarizing the commitments and responsibilities of participants to the project and of the project to them.

(Client advocates will conduct orientations one-on-one or in a small group settings, depending on the volume of applicants and the project's resource constraints.)

- At this point, client advocates will begin the informal and somewhat subjective process of assessing and evaluating each individual's readiness to participate in long-term skills training and be successfully employed in the labor market. They will consider factors such as an applicant's demonstrated interest in and commitment to participating in long-term training, basic education and skills level, current life circumstances (personal and economic), level of generic workplace skills, and recent successes or failures in the workplace. Their assessments of an applicant's generic workplace skills (i.e., skills, attitudes and behaviors needed to survive in the modern workplace, whatever the occupational area) will continue throughout the individual's participation in the project.

(The generic workforce skills assessment, which may be based on appropriate tests, will follow the key workplace competencies identified by the secretary of labor's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills, or SCANS. These include organizing and managing time and resources, utilizing interpersonal skills, processing and communicating information, understanding complex relationships and using computer technology. It will also assess personal qualities, i.e., punctuality, attitude, willingness to accept responsibility, self-esteem, general appearance, integrity and honesty.)

- Client advocates will record their evaluations of individuals' workplace readiness using a rating form. They will identify applicants' perceived strengths and weaknesses and indicate any need for special counseling or training to develop and/or polish their workplace skills.

(The workplace-readiness rating form, which becomes part of the individual's automated case-management file, will be regularly updated by his/her client advocate based on information from other project staff and training instructors.)

- Client advocates will give those who demonstrate a continuing interest in available skills training and who meet the minimum requirements of candidates for such training an application form and a list of the documentation required to determine their eligibility for funding through project sources. Client advocates will also schedule subsequent meetings with their clients.
- Those individuals who are not interested or do not meet the requirements of skills training will be made aware of the direct employment services available through the project or other providers in the area and referred to them, as appropriate.

(2) *Determine eligibility for assistance.*

- Individuals returning their applications and documentation will meet with their client advocates to review these materials and initiate the eligibility determination process. Those who have difficulty completing their applications will be provided assistance, as needed.

(During this time, client advocates will assess applicants' ability to follow instructions, respond within the specified time, gather the required information and complete an assigned task. **All applications will be retained for the project's future evaluation.**)

- Client advocates will enter applicants' information in the computer-based program-eligibility determination system and receive a print out of programs for which each applicant is eligible. This information will be retained in the computerized applicant file, and a hard copy will be given to the applicant.

(The eligibility-determination system will have the capability to check an applicant's eligibility for funding available not only to the project but also to the broad array of other programs operating in the area, including those providing support services and income assistance.)

- Those with a continuing interest in skills training who are eligible for some form of government assistance or able to provide evidence they can pay for training and support themselves over the training period will be scheduled for the intensive career exploration activities described below.
- Those applicants who are not eligible for financial assistance from a federal or state program or who cannot otherwise support themselves over the projected training period will be referred to other project services or other providers in the area.

(3) *Provide intensive career exploration.*

- A series of self-directed career-exploration activities will enable eligible applicants (see above) to explore their interest in and aptitude for working in those occupational areas targeted for skills training. These activities will include interest and aptitude tests which can be self-administered and

evaluated as well as interactive videos, work samples, descriptive reading materials, employer interviews, visits to work sites, employer presentations at the center and, if possible, limited job shadowing experiences in occupations of highest interest.

(Career development materials will be available at the jobs information/resources center described earlier.)

- These career-exploration activities are designed to provide as much detailed information about and exposure to the available occupations as early as possible in the process (i.e., working conditions, potential earnings, upward mobility, related career opportunities, additional education and skill requirements, and positive and negative aspects of working in the field). Though these activities are self-paced, applicants will be expected to complete them within a specified period negotiated with their client advocates.

(The range of exploratory careers at any given time will be determined by the number of occupations identified for skills training by the project's employer services component. Though limited at the beginning of the project, the range will increase as more occupations are identified and additional industries and employers participate.)

- Once applicants' career/occupational preferences have narrowed, client advocates will arrange for them to visit one or more local institutions offering training in their preferred occupations. These visits will expose applicants to a variety of training environments so they can understand the requirements of each and better assess their probability of success in different institutional and cultural settings.

(The project's education and training broker will assist client advocates by arranging these trips to prospective institutions and briefing applicants in advance.)

- Next, applicants will complete an occupational preference worksheet and schedule follow-up sessions with their client advocates. The worksheets will identify their preferred occupations and include specific information that demonstrates a serious career-exploration effort and explains why they are interested in an occupation and why they could benefit from training available through the project.
- Client advocates will meet individually with applicants to review the results of their career-exploration activities, assess their level of interest and complete another assessment of their workplace readiness.

- Applicants who complete their career exploration still interested in skills training and who meet project requirements will be scheduled for in-depth testing and assessment. Those not in this category will be referred to other, more appropriate services.

(Time spent on career exploration may range from one to several days, depending on the number of occupations available and the variety of activities that can be arranged to provide applicants maximum exposure to them.)

(4) *Test and assess basic skills, interests and aptitudes.*

- Client advocates will supervise the administration of an intensive six- to eight-hour testing battery to better determine applicants' basic education and skills (functional levels), interests and aptitudes, and the transferability of their existing skills and prior job experience to their preferred occupational areas. The battery will be administered over a two-day period to avoid testing burnout.

(While a standard battery of tests will be available, the testing process—i.e., the types of tests and when they are administered—will vary to accommodate the educational levels, skills, abilities and needs of each applicant. Testing will be done at the discretion of the client advocates.)

- The career counselor or one of the personal counselors, as appropriate, will assist client advocates by administering the prescribed tests and preparing a summary of results, which will be entered in applicants' files.
- With assistance from the career counselor, personal counselor and/or other qualified staff, client advocates will interpret test results.
- The client advocates will meet with applicants to review test results and general workplace-readiness skills, consider the appropriateness of available long-term skills to their interests and aptitudes and determine their specific needs for such services. The results of this meeting will be entered in applicants' computerized files and be given to them in hard copy.

(Applicants' education and training needs will be determined by comparing the education and skills required for employment in their preferred occupations with their current functional levels, as assessed by their client advocates.)

- Applicants whose education and skill deficiencies or other needs exceed the scope of the project (due either to the unavailability of services or the time required to address the identified deficiencies) will be referred to other service providers. They will be given the opportunity to return to the project once those needs are met. Applicants whose interests and aptitudes do not match those required for training and employment in any of the available occupational areas will also be referred to other education and training providers in the area.
- Applicants with the interests, aptitudes, and requisite education and skill levels to complete available training and be successfully employed in their preferred occupations will be given a financial analysis worksheet and scheduled for another meeting with their client advocates.

(The worksheet, to be completed before that meeting, is a statement of monthly current income and expenses designed to summarize an applicant's sources and amounts of income, and types and amounts of expenses. It will serve as the basis for a subsequent financial-planning session to tally the total costs of his/her participating in training and identify adequate sources of support services and financial assistance to ensure the applicant's successful completion of training and subsequent employment.)

- After completing the financial analysis worksheet, applicants will meet with their client advocates and the support services broker to discuss their life circumstances, determine the types of assistance they need and identify potential sources. This mix of support services and financial assistance will be based on individual needs, and be periodically reviewed and adjusted to reflect changing needs. Barriers to applicants' employability development (i.e., circumstances that would prohibit or significantly impede their successful participation in training) or employment (circumstances that would make working in their preferred occupations impossible or extremely difficult) will also be identified at this meeting.

(At this point in the service process, client advocates will have the information necessary to objectively assess applicants' needs in three critical areas: basic education and occupation-specific skills, workplace-readiness skills, and support services and financial assistance. These assessments form the foundation of the employability-development planning activities that follow. Each area of need must be adequately addressed in the developmental sequence in order for an applicant to enroll in training.)

Special Note: Ideally, enrollment in long-term skills training should not occur until after completion of the employability development plan. If Job Training Partnership Act funds are used to support project participants, they would have to be enrolled here, at step 4. With support and assistance from the local workforce boards, project staff should seek a waiver of this requirement to allow enrollment of all individuals at the point envisioned in this design.

(5) *Refer to a community-support team for review.*

- Applicants whose support-service and financial needs can be met by some combination of resources will meet (a second time for most) with the appropriate community support team for a final discussion of their commitment to participate in and complete long-term training.
- Specifically, the community support teams will interview applicants to:
 - explain the origin of the project and the importance of the project's success for the community;
 - clarify the community's commitment to and expectations of applicants and vice versa (i.e., a contract of mutual responsibility);
 - assess their willingness and level of commitment and the probability that they will successfully participate in, complete and benefit from a long-term education and training program; and
 - initiate mentoring relationships between applicants and one or more team members or community leaders that will continue throughout and beyond the individuals' involvement in the project.

(To support them in this activity, community support teams will be trained in effective interviewing techniques and provided with a generic profile of the ideal candidate for long-term skills training. They will also receive a written set of objective criteria to follow in assessing an individual's willingness, level of commitment and ability to participate in and complete a long-term training program.)

- The community support teams will make a recommendation in each case and forward it to the applicant's client advocate immediately after the interview.

(6) *Draft an employability development plan.*

- At this point in the process, client advocates will schedule joint planning sessions with each still viable applicant, the career counselor, a personal counselor and the appropriate employment services broker. These meetings may also involve the education and training and support services brokers. The purpose of these sessions is to:

- review applicants' stated occupational/ career goals;
- establish their employability and personal development objectives: the requisite education, occupational and workplace-readiness skills for their preferred occupations/careers;
- identify the education, occupational skills and workplace-readiness training required to achieve applicants' goals and objectives;
- review the minimum requirements for participating in and completing the relevant education and skills training as well as the recent performance of institutions offering such training;

(Applicants will receive statistical information on the recent performance of each institution offering training for their preferred occupations, including dropout rates, placement and wage rates at completion and long-term follow-up data. At this point, applicants will also get another opportunity to visit the training institution(s) of their choice before they make a final selection.)

- identify the support services and financial assistance required for applicants to participate in and successfully complete their planned training sequences;
- develop the necessary education, training and support-service sequence to ensure applicants' employability and employment in their preferred occupational areas;

- review the mutual responsibilities and commitments of the participating parties—the project, the community support teams and the applicants; and
 - finalize applicants' employability development plans.
- Once completed, an applicant's employability development plan will be signed by his/her client advocate, the appropriate counselor, the participant, and a representative of the appropriate community-support team (preferably the applicant's mentor). This document will constitute a formal training and services contract that has been mutually developed with the participant that lays out the obligations, commitments and responsibilities of all participants. Along with the staff recommendation, it will be forwarded to the project director for review and a final decision on project enrollment. This plan is an integral part of an applicant's computerized project file.

(A staff recommendation for enrollment must be unanimous. This requirement will help balance any bias toward enrollment on a client advocate's part with a more objective assessment of the applicant's chances for of success by other project staff. This approach will best serve the interests of applicants, the project and employers participating in the project.)

(7) *Enroll in the project.*

- The project director will review the employability development plan negotiated for each applicant. His/her signing the document officially enrolls the applicant in the project and encumbers/commits project funds or other resources to provide the agreed upon education, training, support services and financial assistance. In effect this step establishes an individual training and services account for each enrollee that will be drawn upon to pay for services described in the employability plan or its subsequent modifications. A signed copy of the approved plan will be given to each enrollee.

(The training and services account will reflect the costs of tuition, books, materials and supplies, support services and other financial assistance to sustain a participant during his/her scheduled training period.)

- Upon enrolling in the project, individuals will be assigned a personal counselor who, like the client advocate, will work with them for the duration of their involvement with the project. The client advocates will create a computerized participant file which will include all information in an applicant's file to date.

(Enrollees should have an opportunity to meet with each personal counselor on staff and indicate their preferences to their client advocates before their counselors are assigned. To the extent feasible, enrollees' preferences will be honored.)

- At this point, an applicant's client advocate will work with the education and training and support services brokers to schedule his/her entry into training and/or receipt of the support services described in the employability development plan.
- In the unlikely event that applicants are denied enrollment at this stage in the process, they will be referred to other education, skill-training or social-service providers in the area.

Project Staff and Other Resource Requirements

This component is highly labor intensive. Its successful implementation—and the ultimate success of the demonstration—will require significant staff time and project resources.

- **Client Advocates.** In this component client advocates will function as case managers, either providing or arranging for the services associated with the seven key activities. They will serve as a guide to help applicants identify their needs and interests and access the services they need to make informed decisions about enrolling in long-term training. In this role, client advocates will work primarily for applicants, marshaling project staff and resources on their behalf.
- **Career Counselor.** The career counselor will provide information and guidance services to support each applicant's career exploration, testing and assessment activities and will participate in employability development planning sessions.
- **Personal Counselors.** Staff counselors will provide personal counseling services to applicants as needed to facilitate their employability development planning. They will support the client advocates, provide direct counseling services to applicants or make referrals as necessary, and be involved in the employability development planning sessions of applicants they work with.

- **Education and Training Broker.** The project's education and training broker will provide technical support to the client advocates and assist in the employability development process by identifying approved providers to meet applicants' education and training needs, providing information on each prospective training institution and arranging for applicants to visit their preferred sites to explore the training environments firsthand.
- **Support Services Broker.** The support services broker will work closely with the client advocates to assess applicants' needs for support services and financial assistance and to identify the mix of resources required to allow them to successfully complete long-term training.
- **Community Support Teams.** Community support teams will interview those applicants considered prime candidates for long-term skills training before they are officially enrolled in the project to clarify the community's and applicants' responsibilities and commitments, assess applicants' commitment to this long-term developmental process and likelihood of success, and make recommendations to the appropriate employability development team.
- **Employer Services Brokers.** Employment services brokers will facilitate long-term training applicants' career exploration activities by providing up-to-date information on job opportunities, employer expectations, education and skill requirements for the occupational areas targeted for training, and employer hiring practices. They will arrange for applicants' exposure to potential workplaces and employers and represent the interests of participating employers at employability development planning sessions.

Operating Specifications

(1) *A computer-assisted eligibility determination system*

- Eligibility determination will be done through a computer-based system that allows a client advocate to simultaneously determine an applicant's eligibility for funding from a number of separate sources. This eligibility component will be part of a computerized case-management, participant-tracking and reporting system that supports all project activities. This system will maintain records on all applicants for long-term training as a tool for future evaluations of project results.

(Without a computerized system, the project would have to rely on eligibility workers in each funding/program area to determine or verify an applicant's eligibility for services. This costly and time consuming process must be avoided.)

(2) *Minimum standards for the testing battery*

- The project will employ a wide range of assessment tests and methods which are appropriate for professionals, nonprofessionals or individuals with basic-skills deficiencies.
- The specific testing instruments will be chosen during the operational planning phase of the project, but at a minimum they should be comparable to the following in terms of comprehensiveness:
 - Workplace Readiness/SCANS Skills: Workkeys
 - Basic Skills: Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) and ASSET;
 - Vocational Interests: Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory, Wide Range Interest Option Test and Career Occupational Preference (COP-R);
 - Vocational Aptitude: Career Ability Placement Survey (CAPS), APTICOM and GATB.
- If such instruments can be identified, the testing battery should also include an assessment of the transferability of an individual's current skills and prior work experience.

- In addition to the standard generic tests, any additional interest, aptitude or skill tests which are used/required by participating employers and/or training institutions in a targeted occupational area should be incorporated into the testing process, as appropriate. For example, participants scheduled for education or training programs at a community college or technical institute that requires students to pass the Texas Assessment of Skills Proficiency (TASP) should be pretested to determine whether they can pass the TASP before they enroll.

(3) *Limits on project enrollment*

- Applicants will be tested to ensure that they can function at the minimum standards required for successful participation in long-term skills training before they are enrolled in the project. Those with basic-skills deficiencies that cannot be remediated in a four-month period—preferably in the context of their chosen occupational skills training—will not be enrolled. Those not meeting the minimum entry-level requirements will be referred to other education and training providers and given the opportunity to reapply with the project once they have the necessary prerequisites.

(4) *Contents of the participant file*

- For those officially enrolled in the project, their applicant files now become their participant files. At this point, a participant file will include a completed application form, an up-to-date workplace-readiness rating form, the career preferences worksheet, the financial analysis form, all test results, the community-support team's interview reports and recommendation, a record of any developmental services provided, the final staff recommendation, client advocate's and counselor's notes, and the completed employability development plan.

PERSONAL COUNSELING

Description

The personal and family counseling services described in this component are designed to help project clients address those attitudes and behaviors that impede their personal growth and adversely affect their employability. The project design includes counseling services on the conviction that there are fundamental reasons why so many in the target population do not have the requisite education and skills for high-wage jobs and that many of those reasons are unrelated to their native intelligence and/or ability to learn.

These services go well beyond the career counseling and guidance services of most education and job-training programs. Personal counselors will work with project participants individually and in small groups to help them develop a better sense of self, raise their self-esteem, build effective relationships with others, improve their interpersonal communication skills and accept responsibility for their own behavior.

Personal counseling services are highlighted as a separate component of the project to emphasize their relative importance to its overall success. In practice, they will not be provided as a set of discrete services in linear sequence but will be available throughout individuals' participation in the project and integrated with the other services they receive from intake to post-project follow-up.

Major Activities

- (1) Provide individual counseling services.
- (2) Organize and facilitate group-counseling sessions.
- (3) Make referrals for crisis intervention and counseling.

The Service Process

(1) *Provide individual counseling services.*

- Each applicant enrolled in the project and scheduled for long-term training will meet one-on-one with his/her personal counselor for a general needs assessment. At this initial session, the counselor will begin to review the individual's life circumstances, and begin to explore personal issues, assess needs and establish a relationship of trust. The purpose is to identify any issues/problems that might prevent the individual from participating in group counseling or that cannot be adequately dealt with in a group setting. This information will be used to establish counseling objectives and determine the approach and mix of counseling services most appropriate for the individual.
- The counselor will meet again with the individual to discuss the counseling plan and schedule a time for group and/or individual sessions, as appropriate.

(An enrollee's participation in individual counseling sessions will be determined by the personal counselor based on this/her needs and available project resources. Enrollees will be required to attend and participate in each counseling session scheduled by the counselor.)

- The counselors will meet with their clients as scheduled and make themselves available to discuss personal problems or handle emergency situations that may arise outside of these scheduled sessions.

(It is essential that counselors establish relationships of absolute honesty and trust with each client. Building such relationships will depend on counselors' availability and ability to listen and on the confidentiality of these sessions. Information shared during counseling will be held in strict confidence. Under no circumstances will it be shared with anyone without the explicit permission of the individual. While personal counselors will have access to their clients' project files, other project staff will not have access to anything discussed in the counseling sessions. Enrollees' counseling schedules will be included in their participant files only to prevent the scheduling of other project services at the same times.)

- With permission from a client, counselors may involve other members of his/her family or close acquaintances in some individual counseling sessions, as appropriate.
- While the primary focus of this component is on assisting those enrolled in long-term skills training, limited personal counseling services may also be made available to individuals receiving other project services, depending on resource constraints.

(2) *Organize and facilitate group counseling sessions.*

- Personal counselors will organize and lead weekly group counseling sessions for all those enrolled in long-term training. In these sessions, counselors will function not as problem solvers but as facilitators, encouraging discussion and exploring avenues of inquiry. The sessions will be unstructured and relatively free flowing, designed to allow participants to deal with personal issues, learn to share feelings openly, develop a better sense of who they are, raise self-esteem, improve interpersonal communication skills, develop healthy peer relationships and learn to accept responsibility for their own behavior.

(Enrollees will be required to attend one two-hour group counseling session each week during the first year of their participation in training. They will be strongly encouraged to continue the group sessions as long as they are involved in the project, but mandating group counseling after the first year will be left to the discretion of their personal counselors. A sufficient number of sessions will be offered at convenient times—probably in the evenings—to ensure that all enrollees will be able to participate. Group sessions will be limited to no more than 10-12 participants.)

- At the first group session, the facilitating counselor will explain the ground rules for attendance and participation. The same requirements regarding honesty, trust and confidentiality discussed in reference to individual counseling sessions will be applied here. In the case of group sessions, however, trust must be developed not only between client and counselor but among all members of the group.

(Information shared in group counseling sessions will be held in confidence among members of the group. Under no circumstances will it be shared with anyone without the explicit permission of the

individuals involved. While the counselor will have access to group members' files, other project staff will not have access to any information discussed in group sessions. Breach of this rule by counselors or enrollees will be cause for termination from the project.)

- Personal counselors will encourage the evolution of peer support networks among group members to help them become more independent and at the same time more open and supportive of each other.

(3) *Make referrals for crisis intervention and counseling.*

- As a group, the personal counselors will establish a network of public and private mental-health services providers in the community to whom they can refer individuals whose needs exceed the capacity of the project's services.

(Efforts to identify other professional counseling services outside of project staff should include appeals to church congregations affiliated with Valley Interfaith.)

- Personal counselors will refer for additional counseling any clients in crisis or emergency situations and any whose personal problems need in-depth attention.

Project Staff and Other Resource Requirements

- **Client Advocates.** Functioning here, too, as case managers, client advocates will provide ongoing information and assistance to both project applicants and enrollees. They will refer individuals for personal counseling, as appropriate, assist enrollees in identifying a personal counselor they feel comfortable with and notify the counselors if a participant needs individual sessions.
- **Personal Counselors.** The personal counselors on staff will provide counseling services to individuals participating in the project, primarily those enrolled in long-term skills training.

Operating Specifications

(1) *Professional qualifications and experience of personal counselors*

- Personal counselors on project staff must be licensed and able to document successful experience working with the population groups targeted by the demonstration. At a minimum they will be certified by the State of Texas as either licensed professional counselors (LPC) or advanced clinical practitioners (ACP). They should also have masters degrees in social work or psychology and three to five years experience as independent, professional counselors.
- One personal counselor will be designated as the lead counselor and made responsible for supervising the others. With permission from their clients, counselors may discuss individual cases with the lead counselor for feedback and suggestions.

(2) *Counselor case loads*

- Each of the project's personal counselors will be expected to carry an active case load of 40-50 individuals enrolled in long-term training and lead four two-hour group sessions per week involving 10-12 participants each. They will be expected to provide up to 20 individual sessions per week for clients most in need of working one-on-one and to make themselves available in crisis situations. In addition to their regular case loads, counselors will also provide services to individuals receiving project services referred to them by the client advocates. With this level of responsibility, personal counselors will not be required to provide other project services.

(3) *Private and appropriate space for group and individual sessions*

- Project facilities will include private spaces for personal counselors to meet with their clients, preferably rooms that can be used for both group and individual sessions. These rooms should be quiet, secluded from the project's day-to-day traffic flow and comfortable. There should be no desks or tables in the counseling rooms.

PARTICIPANT SUPPORT AND MAINTENANCE

Description

Many who enroll in the project's long-term skills training will require a mix of support services (i.e., child care, transportation, health care) and direct financial assistance (cash) to successfully participate in training and find productive employment. This component deals with identifying enrollees' needs for assistance and arranging for the resources to meet these needs and enhance their chances of completing training. (The sources of applicants' support services must be identified and committed to them before they formally enter skills training.)

Participants' needs for support services and financial assistance will vary with their economic circumstances and the length of the training programs they select. For this reason, every applicant's needs will be separately assessed and periodically reviewed to accommodate any changes in income and expenses that occur during the training period.

The services of this component—integral parts of the employability development planning process described earlier—will underwrite the enrollees' successful participation in the long-term skills-training and placement component that follows.

Major Activities

- (1) Identify support-service and financial-assistance needs of those to be enrolled in long-term training.
- (2) Arrange the support required to enhance enrollees' chances of completing training.
- (3) Ensure ongoing community support and mentoring for those enrolled.

The Service Process

(1) *Identify support-service and financial-assistance needs of long-term training applicants.*

- Once it is determined that an applicant has the requisite education and skills to effectively participate in one of the long-term training options available through the project, his/her client advocate will require the individual to complete a financial analysis worksheet and schedule a meeting to assess his/her support-service and financial-assistance needs. (This step and the one that follows are also described in the employability development planning component.)
- Using the financial analysis worksheet, the client advocate and applicant will undertake a financial planning exercise that looks at his/her projected income and expenses, including the additional costs associated with participating in training, over the scheduled training period. They will also consider any circumstances that might prohibit or significantly impede the applicant's successful participation in training or make his/her working in the preferred occupation impossible or extremely difficult.
- If the support services and direct financial assistance needs are within the scope of individual, project and community resources, the applicant will be scheduled for an interview with the appropriate community support group as described earlier.

(2) *Arrange the support required to enhance enrollees' chances of completing training.*

- Once the employability development planning process has assessed an applicant's needs, the client advocate will work closely with the support services broker to identify potential sources of assistance in the community.

(Possible sources of support will include traditional social-service agencies in the area, both public and private. In addition other community resources should be identified and approached, specifically church congregations associated with Valley Interfaith, the project's community support teams and local employers, any of which might provide scholarships for those entering long-term training.

(The support services broker will have primary responsibility for keeping track of private and public providers of support services and for developing working relationships with them so the project can access the broadest possible array of resources.)

- During the employability development planning session, the client advocate will formally link the identified support services and financial assistance with the applicant's needs and develop a logical sequence of services that supports the proposed training plan.
- With assistance from the support services broker, the client advocate will arrange the necessary assistance by making referrals to the appropriate providers and monitor the provision of services to ensure they are provided as committed.

(3) *Ensure ongoing community support and mentoring for those enrolled.*

- Working in concert with the volunteer services coordinator and the appropriate community support team, the client advocate will ensure that a mentoring relationship develops between the applicant and one or more community members that will continue throughout and beyond the applicant's participation in training. Initiated during the applicant's interview(s) with the community support team and fully developed once he/she enters long-term training, this should be a personal relationship that offers support, encouragement and assistance over and above any support services and financial assistance the enrollee may receive.

(The name, address and phone number(s) of the mentor will be included in the participant's file and regularly verified/updated as necessary.)

Project Staff and Other Resource Requirements

- **Client Advocates.** As the lead staff working directly with applicants and orchestrating other project staff, client advocates will identify enrollees' needs and arrange the support services, financial assistance and community resources required to enhance their chances for completing long-term skills training.
- **Support Services Broker.** The support services broker will assist the client advocates as they assess applicant needs and take the lead in identifying and arranging the mix of resources required to allow applicants to successfully complete long-term training. He/she will monitor the provision of support and financial assistance to ensure that quality services are provided in a timely fashion.
- **Volunteer Services Coordinator.** In addition to supporting the client advocates, the volunteer services coordinator will work with each community support team to develop mentoring relationships between enrollees and individual community leaders and ensure that these relationships continue throughout the training period.
- **Community Support Teams.** Community support teams will be essential to identifying community members willing to serve as mentors. They will work with the volunteer services coordinator to link community members and individual enrollees.
- **Community Resources.** Local private and public social service organizations, participating church congregations, employers and individuals—all potential sources of support services and financial assistance—will be called on to provide services to enrollees.

Operating Specifications

(1) *Sources of direct financial assistance*

- Client advocates and the support services broker will first help enrollees try to find part- or full-time employment to support themselves during their training.
- Should enrollees also need financial assistance, project staff will assist them in applying for Pell grants, Stafford loans, other low-interest student loans or work-study programs available to individuals enrolled in approved training programs. A second option for enrollees' ongoing assistance might include private employers, associations, charitable organizations, church groups and individuals willing to fund scholarships for qualified training applicants.
- Project resources will be used to provide direct financial assistance to enrollees only as a last resort, when other sources of assistance cannot be identified, or in emergency situations.
- The policy advisory committee should seriously consider establishing a locally based low-interest revolving loan fund as another alternative for providing ongoing financial assistance to enrollees.

(2) *Conditions for receiving support services and financial assistance*

- The financial situation of each enrollee will be reviewed quarterly throughout the training period so that adjustments can be made in the level of support services and direct financial aid to reflect changing needs.
- Enrollees will be required to inform their client advocates if their financial situations change between the regularly scheduled reviews. Failure to do so will constitute grounds for termination from the project.

- Enrollees' continuing receipt of support services and direct financial assistance will be contingent on their satisfactory progress toward completing training, measured by their competency attainment and attendance at training, counseling and other scheduled meetings.
- Enrollees who are not already employed will begin working at least part-time by the midpoints of their training periods.

(Exceptions to this requirement may be made for those with heavy training schedules or family responsibilities which preclude them from working while attending training, i.e., cases where requiring employment would seriously jeopardize their successful completion of training.)

(3) *Limits on the amount of direct financial assistance*

- The policy advisory committee will develop policies governing direct financial assistance available through the project, including the maximum amount of cash available to any single enrollee.

LONG-TERM SKILLS TRAINING AND JOB PLACEMENT

Description

This component provides the basic education and skills-training services specified in the employability development plan and continues the process of developing enrollees' generic workplace-readiness skills begun earlier, in the employability development planning component. Its objective is to ensure that graduates of long-term skills training have educations, technical skills, attitudes and behaviors that meet or exceed those of individuals typically hired by participating employers in the targeted occupational areas.

These developmental services will be provided by project staff and selected education and training providers in the local area, including industry-based training consortia where appropriate. Whatever the institutional arrangements, the preferred approach will combine theoretical training in the classroom and practical training on the job that emphasize learning how to learn and create environments where individuals want to learn and become lifelong learners.

By design, there is not a strong focus here on traditional job-development and placement activities normally found in public job-training programs. Popular wage-subsidy schemes (tax credits and partial wage payments for on-the-job training contracts) will not be employed. Nor will appeals to an employer's sense of social responsibility be used as a technique for placing project graduates in jobs. Either approach would devalue the project and its graduates. If correctly implemented, the employer services component will generate more than enough placements for graduates of the project's long-term training programs by marketing only qualified applicants.

Major Activities

- (1) Refer project enrollees to education and training providers for basic skills remediation and/or occupational training consistent with their employability development plans.
- (2) Monitor enrollees' progress on reaching their employability development objectives.
- (3) Require enrollees' ongoing participation in activities to develop and enhance their job-search skills.
- (4) Provide job-placement assistance, where required.
- (5) Provide follow-up services after job placement.
- (6) Review the performance of participating training institutions.

The Service Process

- (1) *Refer project enrollees to education and training providers for basic skills remediation and/or occupational training consistent with their employability development plans.*

- Client advocates will refer individuals officially enrolled in long-term skills training to institution(s) certified in the targeted occupational areas they selected earlier in the employability development planning process.

(The process for entering long-term training will be streamlined. Project enrollees will not be required to go through a second testing/counseling/enrollment/registration process at the training institutions. Along with electronic information sharing, common procedures will eliminate needless repetition of the intake, assessment and enrollment process at the training institutions.)

- Certified education and training providers will provide the developmental services—occupational-skills training, including limited basic-skills remediation services, and workplace-readiness skills—prescribed in the enrollees' employability development plans.

(In addition to meeting the skill and certification requirements of the appropriate industry training committee, to the maximum

extent feasible training in each occupational area should lead to widely recognized certificates of completion or associate degrees that will enhance enrollees' mobility in the labor market. The secretary of labor's SCANS skills, including computer literacy, will be integral components of the training curriculum for each occupational area.)

- Instructors providing the prescribed occupational training will be required to report monthly (bimonthly in the early stages of training) on each enrollee's performance to the appropriate client advocate. In addition, they will be expected to respond to special requests for information from client advocates and meet with enrollees and their client advocates, as needed. These reporting schedules will be set by the client advocates and may vary by enrollee. Instructor reports will be included in enrollees' automated case management files.

(Regularly requested information will include performance in occupational skills training, time and attendance reports, and assessments of workplace-readiness skills and any perceived barriers to enrollees' successful participation in training. Training instructors will also be responsible for immediately reporting any special or emergency situations that might affect an enrollee's performance to the appropriate client advocate.)

- Identified deficiencies in an enrollee's workplace-readiness skills will be addressed through a combination of services provided as part of skills training, in specially arranged workshops or through individual counseling by the client advocate or career counselor.

(This is a continuation of the workplace-readiness skills assessment process begun earlier, during enrollees' initial interviews with their client advocates.)

- Based on need, the project will offer seminars and workshops on developing workplace-readiness skills covering topics such as building interpersonal relationships, working in teams, accepting responsibility, managing time and stress, processing and communicating information and maintaining personal grooming and professional appearance. When numbers are small, enrollees will be referred to workshops offered by other providers in the area.

- Training instructors will also be expected to make periodic visits to participating employers in the industry group for which they provide training. Such exposure—which in some cases may include temporary employment with one or more of the participating employers—will keep instructors up to date on current technologies and work management practices.

(2) *Monitor enrollees' progress on reaching their employability development objectives.*

- Those enrolled in long-term skills training will be expected to attend training regularly, to perform above average work and to make satisfactory progress toward completing training in the same time frame as other students in the program.
- Client advocates will meet with enrollees individually and contact the appropriate instructors at least monthly (bimonthly in the early stages of training) to review progress on enrollees employability development objectives, reassess their needs and make any necessary adjustments to the employability development plan or the services being provided.

(These reviews will assess the development of enrollees' occupational and workplace-readiness skills and the suitability of their support-service and financial-assistance packages to ensure that they are making satisfactory progress toward established goals. If they are not, their client advocates will work with them and their instructors, as appropriate, to evaluate the reasons and develop remedies. If a client advocate determines that a participant is not prepared to successfully complete the training or that some other barrier is significantly impeding performance, the client advocate will schedule a session with the enrollee and the team that developed his/her initial employability development plan to review the situation and make any changes in the plan and service mix needed to ensure success.)

- If there are indications that the quality of training is not meeting established standards, the client advocate will meet with the instructor to express his/her concerns and seek the necessary changes. If the situation is not remedied to the satisfaction of the client advocate, he/she will inform the project's education and training broker, who with the project director will meet with

officials of the training institution to ensure that its performance rises to established standards.

- In addition to their one-on-one meetings with enrollees, client advocates will schedule monthly meetings that bring together all enrollees on their case loads for general information-sharing, problem-solving and feedback sessions related to project services, community relations and general administrative matters associated with the project.

(These sessions are distinct from and not to be confused with the weekly group-counseling sessions required of all enrollees.)

Special Note: Employers hire people who both have the desired education and training and exhibit values, attitudes and behaviors similar to their own. The mix of project services reflected here – the education and skills training, workplace-readiness workshops and support services – aims to enable enrollees to look, perform and behave like those individuals employers would typically hire through other sources.

(3) *Require enrollees' ongoing participation in activities to develop and enhance their job-search skills.*

- In addition to the developmental activities provided in this component and described elsewhere, client advocates will work with the appropriate employment services brokers to arrange a sequence of services for each enrollee that will enhance his/her job-search skills and employment prospects with participating employers.

(These services might include job-search training and related seminars, self-directed job-search techniques, informal exposure to employers, informational interviews, job shadowing, summer internships and temporary employment with employers with openings in enrollees' preferred occupational areas.)

- The sequence of services, level of exposure and timing will depend on enrollees' progress in developing the requisite occupational and workplace-readiness skills. Ideally, limited exposure will occur early in the skills-training process and will intensify over the training period. If an enrollee is making satisfactory progress, his/her client advocate will

arrange substantive on-site visits, informational interviews and job shadowing experiences with employers in the appropriate industry group by the midpoint of the training period. In the latter half of training, to the extent feasible, enrollees should have access to internships and temporary employment to enhance their chances of full-time employment after graduation.

(The purpose of this exposure is to further orient enrollees to the work environments and cultures of participating employers, give employers firsthand exposure to prospective graduates and begin building personal relationships between enrollees and staff of the hiring employers. If correctly managed in tandem with effective implementation of the employer services component, this exposure should result in immediate employment for all who successfully complete long-term training.)

(4) *Provide job-placement assistance, where required.*

- The employer services component is designed to develop “quality supplier/purchasing agent” relationships between the employer services brokers and participating employers that will ensure the employment of all enrollees who successfully complete long-term skills training. As such this component replaces the standard job-development and placement functions of more traditional job-training programs.
- Working closely with the appropriate employer services broker, client advocates will facilitate job placement and employment for all of those successfully completing skills training as described above. For successful completers, employment should be automatic.
- In cases where employment is not automatic (i.e., the enrollee does not complete training or employers in an industry group cannot follow through on their hiring commitments), the client advocate will arrange for the enrollee to have access to the project’s direct employment and placement services described in an earlier component and assist the enrollee with his/her job search.

(5) *Provide follow-up services after job placement.*

- Some individuals will need continued project services, including support services and financial assistance, for a brief period after they are employed and before they have achieved economic self-sufficiency.
- Client advocates will be responsible for identifying these post-placement needs, assessing individuals' eligibility for various services, helping them access the services for which they are eligible and determining how long the services will be provided.

(The need for post-program services will be individually determined. Project resources will not be used to provide such services for more than 60 days after initial job placement.)

- Once employed, former enrollees will be encouraged to establish and maintain organized support groups modeled on their group counseling experiences in the project. Project counselors will assist former enrollees in organizing such groups.
- Former enrollees will also be expected to assist the community support teams in briefing clients about the working environments in the various occupational areas targeted for training and to function as mentors for individuals entering long-term skills training.

(6) *Review the performance of participating training institutions.*

- The project's education and training broker will review/inspect the entities providing training to project enrollees at least quarterly to ensure they are maintaining the standards that initially qualified them as certified trainers and providing high-quality, appropriate services. In addition, the education and training broker will conduct special reviews at the request of client advocates.

(Training providers will be reviewed against the selection criteria and curricula requirements described later in the operating specifications of this component. The review will focus on the quality of instruction, methodology, facilities and content of the training offered project enrollees.)

- The education and training broker will report any discrepancies between the project's established standards and a training institution's actual performance to the project director and the appropriate client advocate.

Project Staff and Other Resource Requirements

- **Client Advocates.** Client advocates are responsible for referring enrollees to training, monitoring their progress and working closely with training instructors, enrollees and other project staff to ensure that developmental services are provided in a seamless and effective manner.
- **Education and Training Resources Broker.** The education and training resources broker will be responsible for developing relationships with institutional providers of education and training services in the community, working with these providers to access appropriate training and services for project enrollees and periodically assessing the performance of each training institution.
- **Community Education and Training Institutions.** Selected community education and training providers, which may include newly created industry-based training consortia, will provide the prescribed developmental services—basic education, occupational-skills training and workplace-readiness skills—to those enrolled in long-term training.
- **Personal Counselors.** Personal counselors will provide professional counseling services in group and individual settings, participate in the employability planning process of enrollees and participate in regular review sessions of enrollee progress.
- **Career Counselor.** The career counselor will provide counseling assistance to enrollees who wish to reconsider their career and training choices and assist those who do not complete skills training as scheduled.
- **Support Services Broker.** The support services broker will assist client advocates in identifying and accessing the support services and financial assistance required to accommodate the changing needs of enrollees while they are enrolled in training.
- **Community Support Teams/Community Leaders.** Individual members of the community support teams and other recognized community leaders will serve as mentors for long-term skills training enrollees throughout their participation in the project.

- **Participating Employers.** Local employers participating on industry training committees will provide enrollees exposure to work through site visits, presentations, informational interviews, job shadowing, internships and temporary employment opportunities to facilitate their successful transition from training to full-time employment. In some cases, they may also provide scholarships for enrollees who need financial assistance to complete skills training.

Operating Specifications

(1) *Examples of acceptable long-term skills-training arrangements*

- Classroom instruction coupled with appropriate workshop/clinical training of a certified curriculum provided by a postsecondary training institution (e.g., a community college, technical institute or nursing school) that leads to an associate degree or postsecondary certification widely recognized by the appropriate industry group.
- Competency-based training combining classroom and work components provided by a training center operated by a consortium of participating employers in an industry group. Though a single employer may serve as the “training employer” under this arrangement, the training must address job-performance requirements common to all participating employers in the group.
- A structured program certified by the appropriate industry training committee that includes a mix of classroom training provided by an approved training institution and on-the-job training provided by one or more employers in the industry group. Under this arrangement, a trainee may be hired by an employer in the industry group early in his/her training program if the job is part of an industry-approved sequence of training and culminates in promotion to a job that meets project criteria **and** in either an associate degree or postsecondary certification widely recognized by employers in the industry group. The completion of training, certification and job promotion must occur within two years of the individual’s enrollment in training.

Special Note: While most long-term skills training under this project will be provided in the classrooms and workshop facilities of certified training institutions, the development and

use of structured workplace training is encouraged. Such training, however, must incorporate an established, competency-based curriculum and training methodologies that address general occupational rather than employer-specific skills. The informal, unstructured training found in traditional on-the-job programs, which often consists simply of supervisor direction and feedback, will not qualify as work-based learning for purposes of this demonstration.

(2) *General requirements for selecting skills-training providers*

- Industry training committees must take the lead in developing and recommending objective criteria for selecting and certifying education and training providers in each targeted occupational area.
- Once developed, the selection and certification criteria must be approved first by the policy advisory committee as part of the operational planning phase of the project and subsequently by the private industry council. At a minimum, the criteria must include those required by the local workforce boards and address other qualitative factors, including:
 - the training provider's accreditation from nationally or regionally recognized entities;
 - stability of the training institution in terms of length of time in the local area;
 - the institution's graduation/completion rates, i.e., the number of individuals enrolled versus the number who complete training; and
 - the success of the institution's graduates in the labor market, particularly in the occupational areas targeted for training.
- These requirements are not intended to preclude the development of industry-based consortia to provide skills training when viable alternatives do not exist or cannot be developed in a reasonable period of time.

(3) *Technical criteria for approving training curricula*

- Curriculum must address all core education and skills competencies of the occupation targeted for training.
- Competencies must be relevant to the requirements of every employer in the industry group.
- Curriculum must be competency-based and include methods for measuring its attainment in objective terms.
- Curriculum must reflect the principles of effective adult learning and incorporate techniques of experiential learning.
- A computer-based, self-paced approach to training must be used to the maximum extent possible.
- The training curriculum must provide enrollees adequate opportunities to practice and demonstrate the skills and behaviors being developed.
- Training providers must use materials and equipment comparable with those currently used by participating employers.
- Training providers must have a maximum class size of 20 and/or a participant-to- instructor ratio of 10 to 1.

(4) *Responsibility and accountability of the training institutions*

- All entities providing education and long-term skills-training under the demonstration must have a financial stake in the success of each individual enrolled. This will be achieved through performance-based reimbursement whereby they receive tuition payments in installments as enrollees achieve graduated measures of success (i.e., as enrollees successfully complete training, meet the minimum skills standards established by the appropriate industry training committee, find employment in the occupational area in which they trained and remain employed 90 days after their initial placements).

(5) *Limits on enrollment in long-term skills training*

- Applicants will be tested to ensure that they are functioning at or above the minimum levels required for successful participation in long-term skills training before they are enrolled. Those with basic-skills deficiencies that cannot be remediated in a four-month period—preferably in the context of their preferred occupational skills training—will not be enrolled. They will, however, be referred to entities in the area which provide such services and given the opportunity to reapply for skills training at the project once they have the necessary prerequisites.
- Any basic-skills remediation which is provided independent of occupational skills training must take a competency-based, computer-assisted approach that allows individuals to learn at their own pace.
- Occupational training of less than nine months duration will not qualify as long-term skills training for purposes of this demonstration project.

(6) *Limits on developing jobs for and marketing and placing long-term training graduates*

- In no case should any form of a wage-subsidy scheme (i.e., tax credit or on-the-job training wage reimbursement) be offered as a financial incentive to employer involvement in the project or as an inducement to hire project graduates.
- The project will strive for an average wage of \$8.00 per hour at 13 weeks after initial placement, and no one should be placed in a permanent full-time job at an hourly wage of less than \$7.50 per hour. All jobs must provide fringe benefits, including health care.
- Skills training will only be provided for occupational areas with available jobs that meet the above wage and fringe standards and offer upward mobility and clearly identifiable opportunities for career advancement.

(7) *Minimum level of enrollee participation*

- Individuals enrolled in long-term skills training will be expected to invest at least 40 hours per week in some combination of training, work and other scheduled project activities throughout their participation in the demonstration.