

State of Nebraska

State Senior Employment Services

State Plan

Program Year 2008 - 2011

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Section 1 Purpose of the State Plan

Our State Plan describes the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) and its training opportunities which prepare older workers for the jobs available in Nebraska's workforce.

This older worker initiative provides training for older workers through community service organizations. Common locations include schools, hospitals and senior service organizations. Nebraska's SCSEP programs have a working relationship with a wide variety of community organizations. These include local non-profits, senior service

organizations (senior centers and Area Agencies on Aging), other employment training organizations (One-Stops and the Workforce Investment Boards) and local employers. Program adjustments (due to revised regulations, processes, program performance measures or employment niches for older workers) may require substantial changes in program operations. These issues are discussed with Nebraska's project sponsors during regular contacts as well as our Older Worker Council meetings.

Under SCSEP, project sponsors receive grants to create and pay for part-time (usually 20 hours a week) community service positions for low-income senior citizens at local public or private nonprofit organizations. The dual purpose of the program is to provide useful community service assignments for the enrollees while promoting transition to unsubsidized employment. Local public and private nonprofit organizations which provide training opportunities benefit by obtaining the subsidized services of senior community service enrollees.

Use of Funds

Each enrollee is offered a minimum of at least a 20 hour work week. Enrollees placed in part-time community service employment receive a wage not less than the established by the Federal Minimum Wage Law, plus fringe benefits. Host agencies, private nonprofit employers, and public employers provide skill training through subsidized part-time employment in the fields of social services, recreational activities, library services, legal services, health care, education, economic development, conservation, maintenance and restoration of natural resources, community beautification, and other services within communities. A host agency must be a governmental or nonprofit, nonpartisan organization. Examples of host agencies include schools, senior centers, food banks, housing authorities, libraries, community foundations and health agencies.

Participant Eligibility

Any individual is eligible to enroll who is at least 55 years of age, and has an income not greater than 125 percent of the poverty level, or is a member of a family that receives regular cash welfare payments. Income eligibility must be certified annually. All participants must reside in the state in which the project operates, although a grantee may not specify any minimum period of residence for determining eligibility. Grantees may not impose additional eligibility requirements beyond those imposed by federal law. The enrollment **priorities** for filling vacant authorized positions are as follows:

1. veterans and qualified spouses (who meet the special consideration criteria).

2. individuals with the greatest economic need (incomes at or below poverty levels).
3. 65 years of age or older.
4. Seeking re-enrollment following termination of a job through no fault of their own due to illness or engaging in unsubsidized employment, provided that re-enrollment is sought within one year of termination.
5. Have limited English proficiency.
6. Have a disability.
7. Have low employment prospects.
8. Are at-risk of homelessness.
9. Live in rural areas.

Service Provider List

Service Provider	Counties Served	Contact
Operation ABLE	Lancaster	Houston Doan Program Director Lincoln Area Agency On Aging 101 "O" Street Suite 101 Lincoln, NE 68508 (402) 441-6129
Senior Employment Program	Douglas, Sarpy	Roxie MacKenzie Program Director Eastern NE Office on Aging 4223 Center Street Omaha, NE 68105 (402) 444-6684
Experience Works	All counties in Nebraska	Richard Freeman Regional Director PO Box 4040 Des Moines, IA 5033 (800) 782-7519

Section 2

Plan Participation

The development of Nebraska's Senior Employment Services State Plan involved the insight and participation of a variety of interested persons and groups. This planning process involved multiple steps and opportunities for various opinions to impact our initial plan. A brief summary of our planning process includes:

1. State Title V Agency developed framework and draft of State Plan.
2. Nebraska's Title V programs, State Department of Labor and WIA representatives reviewed document for accuracy. They also provided further detail regarding current coordination efforts and recommendations for improving the employment services provided to older job-seekers.
3. Our State Plan has been shared with all WIA agencies, area agencies on aging, and Title V organizations.
4. Our State Plan will be posted on the State Health & Human Services web site. Comments received will be included in the Plan.
5. The State Plan will be e-mailed to Area Agencies on Aging, community service organizations, labor and business organizations.

Organizational Involvement

The following entities were given opportunities to participate in the development of our PY 2008-12 State Senior Employment Services Plan:

1. Area Agencies on Aging
2. State Unit on Aging
3. Local Workforce Investment Boards
4. Nebraska Worker Training Program (NDOL)
5. National and State SCSEP Grantees
6. Nebraska's Older Worker Council
7. Labor and business organizations
8. Community Service Organizations
9. Nebraska Department of Labor

Section 3

Summary of Comments

In addition to the public meetings in Omaha and Lincoln (described below), the State Plan will be e-mailed to Area Agencies on Aging, community service, labor and business organizations. It will also be posted on the State Department of Health & Human Services web-site. All comments received will be reflected in this Plan.

From an August 7, 2008 Omaha meeting to discuss proposed State Plan:

Joe Gudenranth, Mayor Fahey's Office, discussed economic security issues with the group. The discussion focused upon homelessness, age bias and transportation problems faced by the city's residents.

Mike Eastman, Omaha's One-Stop Shop, talked about the increase (from 1500 - 3000 persons/month) unemployed and seeking assistance to locate jobs. He noted that the WIA's have lost funds over the years and have less ability to respond to needs of job seekers. He commented that the WIA relies on ENOA's SCSEP & its other partners to help address support needs of area residents looking for work.

Bev Griffith, Director of the Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging, Roxie MacKenzie, Senior Employment Program Director (SCSEP) and Eli Gordon, Senior Employment Program Job Developer noted that some of the area's most vulnerable older persons are between 50-60 years of age. These persons lack options such as Social Security. They noted that a lot of grandparents are taking care of their grand-children.

Roxie MacKenzie and Eli Gordon commented that older job seekers are usually "looking for something easy on their bodies." Mike Eastman noted that office work without computer skills have dried up. Mr. Eastman felt that the "job-certified training" being developed by the Omaha Workforce Investment Board and the Chamber of Commerce presented a most promising chance to present employers with job-ready workers. Their initial training will provide 60 persons with classroom training for the customer service reps for Blue Cross/Blue Shield and Mutual of Omaha. Participants completing classroom training will be ready for living wage jobs at two of Omaha's leading employers. Roxie MacKenzie commented that several of ENOA's SCSEP participants are among the group being considered for this training initiative.

From an August 13th meeting in Lincoln to discuss the State Plan:

Distribution Report is contained in **Appendix A**. The following is an explanation of the information contained in this report:

1. **Counties** - counties served by program.
2. **Distribution Factor** - equitable distribution of positions within the county listed.
3. **Current Positions** - Number of authorized positions for each grantee in the county.
4. **Difference** - variance from the equitable position level.

Historically, the distribution of Nebraska's SCSEP positions generally favored our rural counties. Until the last couple years, Douglas County (Omaha) had substantially fewer positions than were equitable. During the last few years, Experience Works has shifted a number of their positions into Douglas County. A review of the distribution of positions indicates that a number of Nebraska's rural counties (Brown, Hitchcock, Kimball, Otoe, Phelps, Polk, Chase, Cherry & Cuming) currently have fewer than the equitable number of positions. Positions will need to be shifted into a number of our under-served rural counties. Necessary position adjustments will be the focus of our next Equitable Distribution meeting with SCSEP programs operating within Nebraska. The movement of positions should be accomplished by June 30, 2010.

Special Populations

The Older Americans Act requires this program provide priority in enrollment for eligible individuals who are veterans or spouses of veterans, with greatest economic need, individuals who are minorities, and individuals with greatest social need, individuals who failed to find employment using available WIA services, individuals who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness and those living in rural areas. Our data source is from the 2000 Census.

Greatest Economic Need

The term greatest economic need is defined as persons at or below the poverty level established by the US Department of Health & Human Services. Nebraska's 55+ population includes 55,080 with incomes at or below the poverty level.

Minorities

The term includes American Indians or Alaskan Natives, Asians, Blacks or African-Americans, Hispanics or Latino Americans and Asians or Other Pacific Islanders. Data is not currently available for minorities who are eligible for the older worker programs. Most of Nebraska's African-American live primarily in Omaha and Lincoln. The distribution of our Hispanic population is broader with a

presence on many of our smaller cities such as Norfolk, Lexington and Scottsbluff. Nebraska's eligible minority population over 55 years of age is 3,925 (7.7% of total eligible population). Nebraska's minority population over 55 years of age includes:

	Pop. #	%
African-American	2,245	4.0
American Indian	545	1
Asian/Pac. Islander	286	.5
Hispanic	1,205	2.2

Greatest Social Need

The term greatest social need is defined as needs caused by non-economic factors such as physical and mental disabilities, language barriers and cultural, social, or geographic isolation, including isolation brought about by racial or ethnic status. For purposes of this plan, greatest social need is defined as persons with physical and mental disabilities who are 55 years of age or older. Nebraska's population over 55 years of age includes 32,235 persons with greatest social need. They represent 59% of this age group's eligible population.

Rural & Urban Populations

The Nebraska Department of Labor noted in its 2004 report (Labor Force & Its Demographics) that much of our State's population growth have been in its urban counties and those along the I-80 corridor. More remote counties have lost population. Suburban Omaha has grown dramatically in the last ten years. Visions of Omaha and Lincoln growing into a single metropolitan area no longer seem remote. The 2000 Census notes than only 30% of the Nebraska population live in rural areas. While bio-technology and internet commerce are growing rapidly in our eastern cities, most of Nebraska is rural with an economy that is heavily farming and ranch dominated.

Recruitment

To the extent feasible, enrollment priority will be given to veterans and qualified spouses, eligible individuals having the greatest economic need, eligible individuals over 65 years of age. Our grantees have a history of focusing their efforts upon older individuals both with incomes below the poverty level and those with greatest social need. The State SCSEP program provides 40% of its positions to minority individuals (with Nebraska's minority population at 8% of the eligible population). Over 65% of our grantee's enrollees have annual incomes below the poverty level. Twenty percent of our enrollees are handicapped. Older women represent 80% of our total program enrollment.

Section 5 Supporting Employment Opportunities for

Participants

Regional economic development in Nebraska is in the early stages. Future Force Nebraska is a relatively new initiative of our State Departments of Economic Development, Education and Labor. Their challenge will be to develop a strategy for addressing the economic, workforce and educational challenges in our State's high growth demand occupations. Our high growth demand occupations include biotechnology, construction, entrepreneurship, health services, industrial manufacturing, engineering and transportation. The Department of Economic Development recognizes a number regionalized industry clusters. These industry clusters include processed food, transportation and information services. The State Department of Labor notes that the most common job vacancies are for office and administrative support, food preparation, sales and transportation and material moving.

Some of the most common job vacancies, such as office and administrative support, match the interest of the majority of older women seeking employment. Host agencies provide the location and the skills training to help participants develop job skills towards meeting their goal of locating a position in the workforce. Office work, facility maintenance and food service are the most common types of training opportunities offered through host agencies.

Host agency training may need further supplementation by SCSEP sub-grantees and their WIA partners to provide local employers with job-ready employees. The office jobs currently available require a working knowledge of computers and their capabilities. This technological experience is often underdeveloped by older workers. Some examples of efforts to address this skill gap are the computer skills classes offered by the Senior Employment Program and the job-certified training under development by Omaha's WIB.

Section 6 Increasing Placements to Employment

Increasing the placement of trainees require that a variety of support services will be focused upon all SCSEP trainees as they approach job-ready status. This may be in the form of participation in job-clubs or specialized training through WIA partners. Other anticipated approaches include trial employment or on-the-job training (OJE) with potential employers. Hopefully, initiatives such as Omaha Chamber of Commerce-WIB's job-certified training for Mutual of Omaha and Blue Cross/Blue Shield) become more available.

High growth industries in Nebraska include customer service representatives (for organizations such as Pay Pal, Sitel,

Mutual of Omaha, Blue Cross/Blue Shield and Google - soon) and entry-level health care positions. These opportunities provide a decent wage for Nebraska and a chance for advancement in growing organizations.

Continued success in meeting performance goals will require maintenance and further development of partnerships within Workforce Investment Board and business community. Omaha's job-certified training is one example. Hopefully, their example will be a model that is increasingly more common though-out Nebraska. Similar efforts are necessary to fulfill the Nebraska SCSEP's goal of providing trained workers for our State's high growth industries.

Meeting program performance goals will require focusing support services upon enrollees as they approach job-ready status. This may be in the form of participation in job clubs or specialized training through WIA partners or similar efforts by our grantees. Other anticipated approaches include trial employment or on-the-job experience with potential employers. Trial employment or on-the-job training opportunities will be for a limited time and with expectations of a high rate of hiring by participating employers. In Lincoln, Operation ABLE has provided computer skills training which addresses the needs of area businesses. As a result, a high percentage of participants are hired (by Cabela's call center, for example). Such efforts could be supplemented with modest on-the-job-experience (OJE) contracts. The Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging currently provides computer skills training. They have significantly increased job search activities for persons nearing job-ready status. This support includes resume development, interview skills and applying on-line for area jobs.

Program participants who find employment will continue to receive program support. This support will consist of regular follow-ups with former participants and their employers. The purpose of follow-ups is to address problems and keep these older workers in their new jobs.

Section 7 Community Service Needs

A wide variety of community service organizations provide training for program participants and have the benefits of a part-time worker. Community services needs addressed through SCSEP include educational activities, environmental quality, health care, housing, employment assistance, cultural and recreational services, as well as senior services such as nutrition sites, outreach and referral, and transportation.

In the more sparsely populated areas of Nebraska, community service training opportunities are also limited to local

schools and government agencies. Larger towns offer broader training options which include health care and a number of community service organizations. As expected, Lincoln and Omaha have the widest range of community service possibilities including state, federal and local governments, to local, regional and university hospitals, to cultural centers, ethnic, minority and neighborhood organizations.

The State along with its sub-grantees and other partners on the Nebraska Older Worker Council will continue to discuss community service needs and the organizations addressing those needs. Discussion will begin with an overview from SCSEP's the Quarterly Progress Reports. Promising community service training opportunities (for instance, hospital maintenance staff) will be discussed at the Older Worker Council meetings. Sub-grantee's will be asked about new host agencies providing training as well as host agencies on a waiting list.

Section 8 Coordination with Other Programs

To meet the older worker's basic support needs outside of training for employment, provide training to match older worker's employment goals, and matching older worker's to jobs available at local employers will require coordination with a number of organizations. These organizations include human service, employment and training and employers.

The inadequacy of basic supports such as housing, transportation and possible care needs of a frail spouse or parent will lower a SCSEP participant's chances of completing training and finding a job. Human service organizations such Nebraska's Area Agencies on Aging will be central to addressing these basic support needs. Area Agencies on Aging are familiar with support needs of our elderly and experienced in marshalling community resources to address those needs. Two of the State's sub-grantees are Area Agencies on Aging. Our third sub-grantee (Experience Works) touches all of Nebraska and will work with each of the eight Area Agencies on Aging to address non-employment support needs of SCSEP trainees.

One significant barrier to employment is an inadequate availability of public transit. The State Unit on Aging has established a Senior Transportation Coalition (through a technical assistance grant from the National Center on Senior Transportation). The interest in transportation and the commitment of our broad-based Coalition is encouraging. We are currently working with regional United We Ride representatives and Community Transportation Association of America to bring (CTAA's) Coordinated Transportation

Institute to Nebraska. Local interest in this initiative is strong. Our current efforts focus upon the development of local coordinated transportation initiatives and regional coordinated transportation systems.

The State Unit on Aging has worked with Nebraska's older worker initiative to develop functional partnerships within the WIA system. Our grantees have moved from partners in name only to partners that are active with their local One-Stop Shops. This includes participation on Workforce Investment Boards and their committees. All have current Memorandums of Understanding with the WIB. And older workers are increasingly gaining access to training offered by other partners. (For an example of increased access, see Section 3's description of the job-certified training being developed in Omaha.)

Section 9 Avoidance of Disruptions in Service

Program adjustments may be necessary for a variety of reasons. Reasons vary from the population shift documented by a new Census to an adjustment in funds available to support this program. Modest program adjustments (such as yearly Equitable Distribution position level changes) will not have an impact on current individual enrollees. Actual program shifts would occur as participants leave the program for unsubsidized jobs or for other reasons.

Section 10 Improvement of SCSEP Services

Program improvement suggestions covered a broad area. Suggestions include:

1. Work Opportunity Tax Credit should be extended to older workers.
2. OJE opportunities should be a more significant part of the SCSEP program.
3. National marketing of older workers should be an ongoing effort (must be more than a one week focus).
4. SCSEP training income should be treated the same for Medicaid as Ticket to Work treats income for Medicare. Current rules require interested older persons to choose between training and Medicaid. The need for Medicaid benefits usually prevails.
5. Revitalize the Nebraska Older Worker Council. The Council offers opportunities for training, sharing program practices and individual insight into program niches.

Increased familiarity among Nebraska's SCSEP programs and the people directing these programs will hopefully lead to other program innovations. Specifically, developing collaborative efforts which helps address each program participant's non-employment community support service needs as well as joint employment training opportunities.

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Appendix A - SCSEP Equitable Distribution Report

Appendix B - State Plan Comments