

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT NOTICE	NO. 32-11
	DATE March 1, 2012

TO: STATE WORKFORCE AGENCIES
STATE WORKFORCE ADMINISTRATORS
STATE AND LOCAL WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD CHAIRS
and DIRECTORS
STATE LABOR COMMISSIONERS
STATE RAPID RESPONSE COORDINATORS

FROM: JANE OATES /s/
Assistant Secretary

SUBJECT: Rapid Response Self-Assessment Tool

1. **Purpose.** To announce the availability of a Rapid Response Self-Assessment Tool that allows states to examine various elements of their Rapid Response systems, assess performance, take an inventory of Rapid Response service delivery, and identify areas for self-improvement.

2. **References.**

- Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Final Rules, 20 CFR parts 665.300 – 665.320
- Training and Employment Notice (TEN) 3-10
- Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 30-09
- Training and Employment Notice (TEN) 31-11

3. **Background.** Every worker dislocation is unique, each with different dynamics related to economies, communities, workers, and employers. The Employment and Training Administration (ETA) recognizes that state Rapid Response systems are as unique as the layoffs to which they respond, and that there is no best, single nationwide model for service delivery; instead, programs are tailored to be flexible and responsive to specific regional and local needs of workers and employers. While Rapid Response systems may differ, the process of planning for and responding to dislocations can produce consistent outcomes across impacted workers, employers, and communities.

In early 2009, when General Motors and Chrysler entered bankruptcy, Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis publicly expressed her goal to see all affected workers receive quality, consistent services from the workforce system. In order to promote an approach to Rapid Response consistent with the Secretary’s vision, ETA launched the National Rapid Response Initiative in 2010. The Initiative has consisted of an intensive two-year plan for outreach, engagement, and collaboration between Federal, state, and local Rapid Response practitioners, as well as customers and other stakeholders. One of the primary outcomes of this collaboration was the identification of areas where additional training and technical

assistance would assist states and local areas to better respond to the needs of their communities through enhanced Rapid Response.

As part of that call for additional technical assistance, the attached Self-Assessment Tool was developed to assist states in assessing how well their efforts compare against a series of elements that may be considered fundamental or enhanced benchmarks of a Rapid Response framework. The Self-Assessment Tool is organized to allow states to examine various elements of their Rapid Response systems, assess their performance, take an inventory of how they deliver Rapid Response services, and identify areas for self-improvement.

ETA published a Rapid Response Framework in TEN 31-11. The Rapid Response Framework provides context and strategic analysis for how the each of the elements in the tool may be better understood. The Rapid Response Self-Assessment aligns with this framework, providing states with a tool to examine state systems within the framework.

- 4. Developing the Rapid Response Self-Assessment Tool.** The Rapid Response Self-Assessment Tool was developed by Federal, state and local workforce representatives through a process facilitated by ETA. The Self-Assessment Tool provides a structure for State Workforce Agency leaders to have focused statewide discussions with Rapid Response practitioners and partners. It is designed to focus attention on the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) requirements for Rapid Response and associated fundamental practices, as well as on how to provide enhanced, high quality services to workers, employers and communities. It helps state leadership and Rapid Response teams identify areas where improvement is needed and highlights areas of high performance worthy of sharing with the workforce system.

ETA encourages State Workforce Agency leaders to use the Self-Assessment Tool by engaging state administrators, program directors, and Rapid Response practitioners to discuss the state Rapid Response system and share experiences in order to capture an informed assessment of how Rapid Response delivery effectively works or could be improved in your state.

The Self-Assessment Tool is a voluntary opportunity for states to self-evaluate their Rapid Response system and use of Rapid Response funds. It is not a mandatory review, and there is no requirement that states complete or share the results from the Self-Assessment Tool. The Self-Assessment Tool is flexible and states can customize it to respond to unique state needs. States can use the Self-Assessment Tool to develop an understanding of state strengths and weaknesses; to provide guidance and training to Rapid Response practitioners; to identify and cultivate partnerships, ideas, and conversations; and to discuss state needs for technical assistance from ETA. The results of such actions could improve a state's ability to respond to the needs of each unique dislocation event and the workers affected. ETA strongly encourages states to discuss the outputs and knowledge gained by using the Self-Assessment Tool among state agencies, between regional and peer states, and with the appropriate ETA Regional Office.

- 5. Organization of the Self-Assessment Tool.** The Self-Assessment Tool is organized into ten elements, and it is designed to allow states to assess how well they execute these elements and to create their own improvement plan. The Self-Assessment Tool organizes these

elements within three cross-cutting headers: Planning and Preparation; Providing Customized, Collaborative Solutions, and Consistent, Quality Results; and Ensuring Comprehensive Reemployment Solutions.

Planning and Preparation

Elements 1 through 5 of the Self-Assessment Tool involve activities that establish a Rapid Response infrastructure. Given the dynamic context within which Rapid Response works, and that quick and decisive action is often needed for early intervention, it is essential that states be positioned to respond. This section of the Self-Assessment Tool is designed to examine whether a statewide Rapid Response unit is in place, and that it is organized to plan and deliver services that enable dislocated workers to transition into new employment as quickly as possible.

Element 1: Establishing a Rapid Response Infrastructure

This element captures the fundamentals of establishing and funding a Rapid Response system and provides a general overview of Rapid Response administration and organization from the top down.

Element 2: Building and Maintaining Relationships with Stakeholders

This element captures the building of dynamic relationships between stakeholders and system partners. It is a process that seeks to identify the critical connections that have been made and what actions occur that are active on an ongoing basis and contribute to strategic planning.

Element 3: Documenting Policies and Procedures

This element captures how states provide effective, long-term solutions through established policies and procedures, including plans for staff training, provision of pre-layoff services, and contingency plans for when major dislocations occur.

Element 4: Gathering Intelligence

This element captures how data collection occurs and continually moves forward and how state systems are aligned to produce and disseminate good intelligence.

Element 5: Promoting the Effectiveness of Rapid Response Services

This element captures how states have developed relationships with employers, and how they communicate what is available through the workforce system to best assist their workers.

Providing Customized, Collaborative Solutions and Consistent, Quality Results

Elements 6 through 8 are designed to examine and assess performance related to the collaborations that are necessary to assess potential dislocations prior to the event; gather and analyze information on impacted workers; provide customized and consistent solutions and services to employers, workers and the community; and to ensure strong connections to One-Stop Career Centers. These elements are process-oriented and involve rapid, time-sensitive exchanges of information that could lead to critical strategic decisions.

Element 6: Assessing Potential Dislocations

This element captures how the Rapid Response system assesses potential layoffs and develops an intervention plan prior to responding to a dislocation event in order to ensure that each Rapid Response event is timely, comprehensive, and accessible.

Element 7: Collecting and Analyzing Worker Survey Data

This element captures how data is collected that will help understand the needs of the impacted workers, as well as how the data is used to speed up reemployment.

Element 8: Providing Information, Solutions, and Services to Employers, Workers, and the Community

This element captures how information is delivered so that it is heard, understood, and inspires a response; and how employers and impacted workers are connected with service providers, trainers, and other stakeholders to begin the reemployment process.

Ensuring Comprehensive Reemployment Solutions

Elements 9 and 10 are designed to focus on how local boards, One-Stop Career Center leaders, community and economic development entities, and employers are engaged with Rapid Response events in order to align strategies and resources.

Element 9: Connecting Affected Workers to the Workforce System and One-Stop Career Centers

This element captures how the connection to the workforce system is made during the Rapid Response meeting, in order to ensure that workers' transition to One-Stop Career Center services is smooth.

Element 10: Providing Services to Employers

This element captures how Rapid Response serves employers.

6. **Completing the Self-Assessment Tool.** The Self-Assessment Tool has a column of benchmarks representing “Fundamental” operations and a column of benchmarks representing “Enhanced” operations; within each benchmark section individual indicators are included. The “Fundamental” performance levels are a combination of statutory and regulatory requirements. The “Enhanced” performance levels are a combination of effective practices observed by Federal and state monitors. These indicators are not all-inclusive, and practices that do not appear may be added by states to more accurately represent their customized program delivery system.

A rating scale is located between the benchmark columns. States should compare each benchmark to their existing operations and agree on a rating of 1 to 4.

- If current operations do not have the capacity to meet the benchmark, the benchmark the rating is 1.
- If all components of the benchmark are met on a basic level, the rating is 2,
- A rating of 3 indicates that all components of the benchmark have been met, and the state has built the level of capacity so that the delivery of the benchmark goes beyond the basic level.
- If all components of the benchmark are delivered at full capacity, and there is evidence that the enhancements have had positive results in the delivery of services to dislocated workers, employers, and/or other stakeholders, then the rating is 4.

States are encouraged to provide comments on their selected ratings in the comments section of the Self-Assessment Tool. Helpful comments may include descriptions of how each benchmark is achieved in a particular state or local area, explanations of how ratings were

determined at each level, and discussions of how a benchmark not currently in place can be adopted for use in the state. Additionally, comments provided at the time of completing the Self-Assessment Tool on system strengths and areas of improvement could aid in future discussions of best practices and requests for technical assistance, training, and capacity-building funds.

7. **Incorporating the Results.** Due to the economic conditions of the past few years, many states have had extensive experience in providing Rapid Response without necessarily having the time and opportunity to reflect on the lessons learned. This Self-Assessment Tool provides opportunity to document, reflect and share lessons learned, as well as to thoughtfully consider strategies for moving forward as new economic realities emerge. A completed Self-Assessment Tool provides a point-in-time snapshot, which allows for future assessments and identification of strategies to continue to improve states' Rapid Response systems.
8. **Inquiries.** Any questions about the Self-Assessment Tool, or requests for technical assistance, should be addressed to the appropriate ETA Regional Office.
9. **Attachment.** Rapid Response Self-Assessment Tool.