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# Practices from the Field in Outreach to Employers and Participants in the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Program

An Occasional Paper Prepared as Part of the *Evaluation of  
the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This report describes practices used by state workforce agencies to contact and educate workers, employers, and partner organizations about Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) and, in some cases, to persuade these key actors to participate in the program. TAA is targeted to dislocated workers who have been adversely affected by import competition and plant relocation and provides an array of services and income support benefits in order to help workers find suitable re-employment. Services and benefits include training, job search assistance, relocation assistance, health care tax credits, wage insurance for older participants, and income support after the exhaustion of Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits.

However, accessing services and benefits in TAA is complicated, involving multiple steps, many actors, and specific deadlines. Workers must be part of a group for whom a petition has been filed with and approved (or “certified”) as being the result of foreign trade by the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) of the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), which is responsible for overseeing administration of the program at the Federal level. After petitions are certified, states must identify workers in the certified groups and notify them of their potential eligibility for TAA. The workers then must seek out services at the appropriate state or local office, where they must be determined individually eligible for TAA and participate in the development of an individual employment plan, after which they can receive services and benefits.

These multiple and complex processes suggest that outreach is critical at several stages in TAA. The need for outreach relating to petition-filing has been recognized in the legislation authorizing the program, which has long required DOL and the cooperating state workforce agencies “to provide whatever assistance is necessary to enable groups of workers to prepare the petitions” to establish eligibility for TAA. TAA regulations also specifically require states to inform workers covered by certified petitions about the program and workers’ potential eligibility for services and benefits. Further, the need for effective outreach has increased as amendments to the program have expanded eligibility to the service sector, where neither workers nor employers are familiar with the program.

In some states, outreach to individuals eligible for TAA commonly consists only of 1) brief descriptions of TAA during presentations to workers affected by large dislocations, as provided by Rapid Response teams (under the Workforce Investment Act or WIA) and 2) notification

letters sent by state agencies to workers whose names appear on lists provided to the state by employers after a dislocation event has been certified. However, many states do more to find, inform, and advise workers and employers about TAA. This report, prepared as part of the process study of the national Evaluation of the TAA program, describes those other and potentially more effective ways that states have tried to use various outreach methods to increase awareness of the program, promote petition-filing, encourage enrollment, and prevent participants from prematurely leaving training or other interventions whose completion may be beneficial to them in the labor market.

Improving outreach faces the general obstacle that administrative funds for this purpose are quite limited. Whether states should spend more resources on outreach is a matter of policy judgment and balancing competing priorities. But for states that conclude that additional outreach is a worthwhile use of funds, this report describes practices that have the potential to make TAA benefits and services more available to trade-impacted workers who are eligible and may benefit from them.

## **Methodology**

This report is primarily descriptive. It is based on information acquired as part of the fifth round of data collection for the process study in the larger TAA evaluation. The report also uses information gleaned from prior data collected for the process study as well as survey and administrative data on workers eligible for the TAA program. Specific outreach practices were initially nominated by ETA's regional TAA coordinators, who were asked to identify states thought to have innovative and effective outreach activities that addressed the objectives cited above regarding petition-filing, enrollment and retention. The coordinators nominated 35 practices in 13 states. All nominations were reviewed and nine of what appeared to be the most promising practices were selected. In addition, information on outreach activities was provided by three labor organizations that had been awarded grants by ETA specifically to conduct enhanced outreach. Qualitative data were collected in May and June of 2011 through telephone interviews conducted with state TAA officials and the three grantee organizations as well as from site visits conducted as part of the larger evaluation.

## **Conceptual Framework**

Outreach in this report covers practices and methods not only for contacting and educating workers and employers, but also for finding and persuading them. Further, the conceptual framework used here categorizes outreach activities by three broad programmatic objectives, identified as:

- Increasing the number of petitions filed, and improving the quality of petitions, so they are certified;
- Improving program enrollment among workers eligible for TAA, once a petition has been certified; and
- Enhancing retention of participants in the TAA intervention, so they can complete training, conduct a successful job search, and obtain suitable re-employment.

Further, this report identifies four general types of problems that outreach efforts in TAA are designed to address (and which have different nuances in regard to each objective above):

1. **Lack of knowledge.** Many workers, employers, and other interested and responsible parties are unaware of the TAA program, including the petition-filing process and the services and benefits that may be available.
2. **Unrealistic worker expectations.** Some workers do not expect they will need TAA services or benefits, for several reasons: They believe they will be recalled or are in denial about their impending separation; they pursue alternative adjustment strategies, such as self-directed job searches which are not successful; or they are so discouraged, they give up looking for work or retire prematurely.
3. **Employer reluctance and lack of resources.** Employers vary greatly in the extent to which they facilitate worker adjustment during dislocation. In trade dislocations, some employers do not publicly acknowledge trade-related job losses, while others may lack resources to facilitate petition-filing or access to services, or have gone out of business entirely. Some may not be willing to file petitions, inform state agencies of an impending trade-related dislocation, or furnish the state with lists of workers eligible for TAA after a petition has been certified.
4. **Lack of capacity in the workforce system.** State and local workforce agencies may lack funding, staff, and systems to conduct effective outreach (and thus address knowledge gaps, unrealistic expectations, or employer reluctance or lack of resources).

## Practices to Promote Petition-Filing

To increase awareness of TAA and potentially increase the number of TAA petitions, a range of tactics and practices have been used, including:

- **Mining administrative data to find dislocations.** To identify trade-affected workers, several states are using data sources such as Unemployment Insurance (UI) claims and Employment Service (ES) mandatory registrations to find dislocations that Rapid Response may have missed, with possible TAA petitioning as a corollary. **New York** has begun using these data to develop reports that are furnished to the Rapid Response teams.
- **Use of multiple methods – website, hotline, and brochures.** **Washington** contracted with its state labor federation to conduct a range of approaches to increase awareness of TAA and petition-filing, including: an up-to-date web site with links to information on petitions, a telephone hotline, and brochures.

- **Frequent meetings with partner organizations.** **Washington** holds periodic regional partnership meetings with staff from One-Stop Career Centers, community colleges, economic development agencies, and local employer and labor organizations.
- **Town hall meetings with workers and communities.** Organized labor outreach grantees from the **AFL-CIO Working in America Institute** (and its sub-grantees in eight state labor federations) and the **International Association of Machinists** (working in Wisconsin) hold town hall meetings to increase awareness among local union officials, workers, and the community at large.
- **Centralized technical assistance.** **Washington's** labor federation provides technical assistance to all TAA petition filers in the state, and its staff members file appeals for some petitions that are denied. **Pennsylvania's** state agency also has dedicated staff to assist in petition filing, and the state files a petition if no worker, employer, or union is willing to do so.
- **Adding TAA information to UI seminars for employers.** **Michigan** added a general overview of the TAA program to its seminars on UI to educate employers.

## Practices to Increase Enrollment

Given TAA's relatively complex eligibility rules and requirements, there is a wide range of problems associated with lack of knowledge, faulty expectations, employer reluctance, and limited capacity in the workforce system that need to be overcome in regard to enrollment in the program. Practices to enhance outreach related to program enrollment include:

- **Mining administrative data to find certified workers.** When an employer is unable or unwilling to provide to the state a list of certified workers eligible for the program, alternative means need to be found to get this information, so that workers can be notified of their potential eligibility for TAA. **Oregon** uses its UI data to identify workers if the employer is unable or unwilling to provide the lists. The state uses a simple query process, executed by TAA staff, to extract names and addresses from wage records and claims files and then sends notification letters.
- **Multiple methods – website, hotline, brochures, and advertising.** In **Washington**, the approaches identified earlier to increase petition-filing (an up-to-date web site with links to information on petitions, a telephone hotline, public service announcements, and brochures) also are used to increase enrollment among eligible workers.
- **Collaboration with labor organizations.** Unions have been seen as having a special role in helping to overcome knowledge gaps and unrealistic expectations among workers. **Michigan** collaborates with local unions, the state AFL-CIO, and the United Auto Workers, all of which use multiple information-sharing methods, including personal contacts, and have been critical in "rounding up" workers
- **Peer counseling** where co-workers are paid by the workforce system (typically through Rapid Response funds), is designed to overcome lack of knowledge and unrealistic worker expectations and encourage fellow dislocated workers to enroll in TAA. The

method creates an effective division of labor in which the outreach work is carried out by trusted co-workers, allowing TAA staff to focus on counseling, deadlines, and other aspects of service delivery. For example: **Pennsylvania's** Rapid Response unit coordinates the planning process and trains peer counselors. Local workforce administrators paid for these counselors using Rapid Response funds distributed to local areas. **Michigan** uses peer counselors through a contract with the state AFL-CIO. However, even well-trained counselors may not be able to overcome deeply held negative expectations about the labor market, as occurred in Flint, where deeply discouraged workers did not participate in TAA despite repeated efforts to engage them.

- **Social networking.** Social networking updates a very traditional—and often highly effective—outreach method: word-of-mouth. The possibility of quick and broad information-sharing at a very low cost makes social networking a potentially powerful tool. The expectation is that information will spread “virally,” as workers pass information on to other members of their networks who, in turn, will spread the information further throughout their own networks. At the time of data collection, **Washington** had created a Facebook page with links to petitions and TAA staff and was also planning a YouTube video. **California** was planning to use Twitter to improve outreach, with TAA staff sending out “tweets” when ETA issued certifications and when the state held orientations or intake sessions.
- **Enhanced intake processes.** Several states undertook changes to facilitate enrollment and reduce the risk that eligible workers are ignored or overwhelmed by intake requirements. **Pennsylvania** has scripted each step of the intake process, mobilizing additional staff for large dislocations to ensure that all components of the workforce system are working in concert, and to track participant steps from initial Rapid Response to enrollment. **California** designed a structured intake process that ensures key steps are taken. The State has created checklists for staff delineating each step of the eligibility/enrollment process and, for participants, details on specific enrollment requirements.
- **Frequent and open service planning with partners.** **Oregon** established weekly meetings involving local and state TAA officials, WIA staff, community colleges, employers and unions to strategize about how to provide adequate information, assist affected workers, and coordinate services.
- **Assistance to limited-English proficient workers.** Knowledge gaps about TAA are especially acute among these workers and translations of key documents—such as notification letters and applications—are rare. One state, **Oregon**, based on information from the service planning discussed above, made forms available in Spanish, Russian and Vietnamese and brought in translators for oral presentations when necessary.

## Practices to Improve Retention

Retention is especially important in TAA, where the average program participation is much longer than in the WIA dislocated worker program and where there are more complex

requirements for participation. Several states have developed processes<sup>1</sup> to improve retention, including:

- **Comprehensive tracking systems.** **California** has a lengthy paper-based checklist for front-line staff to use to assure all steps are followed, deadlines are met, information is sent to the right place, and participants are contacted to check on their progress. **Massachusetts** uses an integrated system that expedites paperwork and assists front-line staff members with tracking participant progress, contacting them when appropriate, and meeting deadlines in TAA.
- **Enhanced contact information.** **South Dakota** improved participant contact by obtaining as many telephone numbers for other household members, relatives, friends, or former co-workers as a participant is willing to supply, in order to be able to reach participants later.

## Common Themes

Three general themes ran through the practices informants felt constituted stronger outreach efforts (regardless of the specific strategies): **rigor** in application of the practice, **accountability** for results, and the use of **partnerships**, all of which distinguished them from more routine outreach efforts in TAA:

- **Rigor.** Most of the practices discussed in the paper are not uniquely designed to serve the needs of TAA, but, rather, have been used with some regularity in the broader workforce investment system to serve dislocated workers and others. For example, peer counseling, labor and employer cooperation, and brochures are all tools that have been widely used for the last thirty years in all types of dislocations. However, the practices described here appeared to have been implemented with substantially more rigor and greater attention to detail than is typical.
- **Accountability.** Accountability in the TAA program is essential as documenting dates and descriptions of services received is required. A number of potentially promising practices involve embedding additional procedures that track usage, hold individuals (both staff and participants) responsible, and generally provide the capacity to manage processes better, in order to address participant needs and achieve results.
- **Partnerships.** Collaboration and partnerships are common in workforce programs, but are perhaps even more necessary in TAA because of its complexity. The final common thread in strong outreach efforts is the use of partnerships and collaboration. Partnerships recognize the limitations of administrative resources and the interests of others with common or related goals related to outreach in TAA. Key examples of partnerships discussed here include: state level TAA programs in Pennsylvania and California

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<sup>1</sup> Effective case management, which is important in any workforce program, is a critical component of retention efforts. We excluded case management from this guide, however, because it has been covered thoroughly in several other studies of TAA conducted by SPR.

working with local WIA programs to support TAA intake efforts that would otherwise have overtaxed existing resources. Washington collaborates with economic development agencies, community colleges, and other agencies to broaden awareness of TAA, and collaborates with organized labor for outreach to dislocated workers generally and to those eligible for TAA in particular.

## Challenges in Expanding and Improving Outreach

There are several substantial challenges—cutting across the categories of outreach and the types of underlying problems—that need resolution before the potentially promising endeavors described in this report can confidently be considered effective practices. These challenges include:

- **Lack of problem analysis.** The states highlighted in this report were not particularly analytic in developing their practices. Most simply applied familiar tools to a general problem (such as petitions not being filed or eligible workers not enrolling). There was little evidence that states explored in detail the specific causes for low petition-filing or enrollment rates, or that they conducted systematic interviews, surveys, or focus groups with eligible workers or front-line staff to parse out the specific problems that needed to be addressed. For example, while peer counseling appears to be useful in addressing both knowledge and expectation problems, it remains important to more clearly identify the specific needs of workers so that the counselor training and practice can directly address them.
- **Limited data and evaluation.** There was little evaluation of the efficacy of practices. Thus, for most of the practices in the guide, data on results are spotty, anecdotal, or completely absent. While cost and other logistical factors make formal evaluation inappropriate for what are largely day-to-day management techniques, states might want to consider collecting more data and implementing managerial processes that allow for review of these practices to determine whether they are actually effective in increasing petition filings or enrollment among eligible workers.
- **Restrictions on sharing data.** Federal and state requirements on protection of data with personally identifiable information have been increasing. Two states, California and Washington, sought to use third parties—the Local Workforce Investment Areas and the state labor federation, respectively—to conduct follow-up outreach with workers who had not responded to the initial state-issued notice. However, in both cases, restrictions on the use of data with personal information precluded those efforts. Given Federal requirements and broad public concern about security breaches, it is likely that such restrictions will only increase in the future and may hinder or complicate outreach efforts, even in states with currently less restrictive rules.

## Potentially Promising Practices

Of the practices presented in this report, a few stand out as relatively more promising. Such practices demonstrate some of the attributes associated with effective outreach and, in a few cases, have addressed some of the challenges identified above. Further, some of these practices

appear to come at little cost, so they do not require difficult judgments about how to balance program priorities. In such cases, even if the practice has limited results, it still may be cost effective. These relatively more promising practices include:

- An **intake process** that mobilizes several branches of the State Workforce Agency and the local One-Stop Career Center system may solve several problems related to take-up. **Pennsylvania's** intake comes closest to having the attributes of rigor, accountability, and partnership. State and local partners reviewed procedures and the state has modified them periodically. Further, the state collected data on the results, in order to have useful information for managing the practice and steering it towards greater effectiveness.
- **Labor movement collaboration** has an extensive history in serving dislocated workers, including those eligible for TAA, in many states for many years. The evidence from current TAA research and SPR's earlier work on Rapid Response clearly suggests that organized labor has a strong motivation to assist both members and non-members. Labor involvement for TAA is probably best exemplified in the State of **Washington**, which used its state labor federation to conduct a wide variety of activities to increase petitioning and take-up.
- Use of **UI data** to identify eligible workers and provide additional outreach. **New York** used UI and ES data to identify dislocations that may have escaped Rapid Response. **Oregon's** development of notification lists and letters stood out for its ease of use. Giving TAA/TRA staff the capability to query UI databases may improve organizational coordination while holding down costs.
- **Peer counseling** has a long history in dislocated worker services, including TAA. Its practitioners, including nearly all the states cited in this study, consistently report that it has been very successful. While the data on effectiveness are sparse, the logic of this approach to promoting TAA take-up is very compelling.
- **Social networking** through technology is still in its infancy. Nevertheless, several strategies appear to have strong potential to address both knowledge gaps and unrealistic worker expectations for all three outreach categories, so thoughtful experimentation should be encouraged. If its potential is fulfilled, social networking is likely to be highly useful and cost effective.
- **Employer seminars** that include TAA among a range of workforce topics may benefit TAA petitioning and take-up. **Michigan** has been able to take advantage of interest in UI to get employers to learn about TAA. While it is impractical to evaluate such a practice for any direct impact on TAA outreach, the cost to the program is so slight that adopting such a practice is reasonable because of the likelihood of a net benefit.

# I. INTRODUCTION

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The Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program provides an array of services and benefits, including training, job search assistance, health care tax credits, wage insurance, and income support, to workers adversely affected by import competition and plant relocation. However, accessing services and benefits in TAA is complicated, involving multiple steps, many actors, and specific deadlines. Workers must be part of a group for whom a petition has been filed with, and approved (or “certified”) as being the result of foreign trade by, the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) of the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), which is responsible for overseeing administration of the program at the Federal level. After petitions are certified, states must identify workers in the certified groups and notify them of their potential eligibility for TAA. The workers then must seek out services at the appropriate state or local office, where they must be determined individually eligible for TAA and participate in the development of an individual employment plan, after which they can receive services and benefits.

These multiple and complex processes suggest that outreach is critical at several stages in TAA. The need for outreach relating to petition-filing has been recognized in the legislation authorizing the program, which has long required DOL and the cooperating state workforce agencies “to provide whatever assistance is necessary to enable groups of workers to prepare the petitions” to establish eligibility for TAA. TAA regulations also specifically require states to inform workers covered by certified petitions about the program and workers’ potential eligibility for services and benefits. Further, the need for effective outreach has increased as amendments to the program have expanded eligibility to the service sector, where neither workers nor employers are familiar with the program.

In some states, outreach to individuals eligible for TAA consists primarily of 1) brief descriptions of TAA during presentations to workers affected by large dislocations, as provided by Rapid Response teams (under the Workforce Investment Act or WIA) and 2) notification letters sent by state agencies to workers whose names appear on lists provided to the state by employers after a dislocation event has been certified. However, many states do more to find, inform, and advise workers and employers about TAA. This report, prepared as part of the process study of the national Evaluation of the TAA program, describes those other and potentially more effective ways that states have tried to use various outreach methods to increase

awareness of the program, promote petition-filing, encourage enrollment, and prevent participants from prematurely leaving training or other interventions whose completion may be beneficial to them in the labor market.

Improving outreach faces the general obstacle that administrative funds for this purpose are quite limited. Whether states should spend more resources on outreach is a matter of policy judgment and balancing competing priorities. But, for states that conclude that additional outreach is a worthwhile use of funds, this report describes practices that have the potential to make TAA benefits and services more available to trade-impacted workers who are eligible and may benefit from them.

## **Methodology**

This report is primarily descriptive. It is based on information acquired as part of the fifth round of data collection for the process study in the larger TAA evaluation. The report also builds on other information from the evaluation, including that gleaned from prior data collected for the process study as well as survey and administrative data on workers eligible for the TAA program.

Specific outreach practices were initially nominated by ETA's regional TAA coordinators, who were asked to identify states thought to have innovative and effective outreach activities that addressed the objectives cited above regarding petition-filing, enrollment and retention. The coordinators nominated 35 practices in 13 states. All nominations were reviewed and nine of what appeared to be the most promising practices were selected. In addition, information on outreach activities was also provided by three labor organizations that had been awarded grants by ETA specifically to conduct enhanced outreach. Qualitative data were collected in May and June of 2011 through telephone interviews conducted with state TAA officials and the three grantee organizations as well as from site visits conducted as part of the larger evaluation. The states and grantees are listed in Exhibit I-1

**Exhibit I-1**  
**States and Labor Organizations from which Data Were Collected for this Guide**

California	South Dakota
Illinois	Washington
Massachusetts	Washington State Labor Council (state AFL-CIO)
Michigan	International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW)
Oregon	AFL-CIO, Working for America Institute
Pennsylvania	

## Conceptual Framework

Outreach in this report covers practices and methods not only for contacting and educating workers and employers, but also for finding and persuading them. Further, the conceptual framework used here categorizes outreach activities by three broad programmatic objectives, identified as:

- Increasing the number of petitions filed, and improving the quality of petitions, so they are certified;
- Improving program enrollment among workers eligible for TAA, once a petition has been certified; and
- Enhancing retention of participants in the TAA intervention, so they can complete training, conduct a successful job search, and obtain suitable re-employment.

Further, this report identifies four general types of problems that outreach efforts in TAA are designed to address (and which have different nuances in regard to each objective above):

1. **Lack of knowledge.** Many workers, employers, and other interested and responsible parties are unaware of the TAA program, including the petition-filing process and the services and benefits that may be available.
2. **Unrealistic worker expectations.** Some workers do not expect they will need TAA services or benefits, for several reasons: They believe they will be recalled or are in denial about their impending separation; they pursue alternative adjustment strategies, such as self-directed job searches which are not successful; or they become so discouraged, they give up looking for work or retire prematurely.

3. **Employer reluctance and lack of resources.** Employers vary greatly in the extent to which they facilitate worker adjustment during dislocation. In trade dislocations, some employers do not publicly acknowledge trade-related job losses, while others may lack resources to facilitate petition-filing or access to services, or have gone out of business entirely. Some may not be willing to file petitions, inform state agencies of an impending trade-related dislocation, or furnish the state with lists of workers eligible for TAA after a petition has been certified.
4. **Lack of capacity in the workforce system.** State and local workforce agencies may lack funding, staff, and management information systems to conduct effective outreach (and thus address knowledge gaps, unrealistic expectations, or employer reluctance or lack of resources).

Exhibit I-2 summarizes the problem types from the conceptual framework used in the report, and lists the examples that illustrate potentially promising practices that address these problems.

### Exhibit I-2

#### Summary of Outreach Problems and Solutions in This Report

Type of Problem/Solution	State/Organization
<b>Petition-filing</b>	
Lack of knowledge and employer reluctance – data mining to identify potential dislocations	New York
Lack of knowledge - increase awareness through multiple channels, including partnership and town hall meetings	Washington , AFL-CIO Working for America, IAM
Lack of knowledge -provide centralized technical assistance in filing	Washington, Pennsylvania
Lack of knowledge/employer reluctance – information for employers	Michigan
<b>Enrollment</b>	
Employer reluctance - data-mining to improve certified worker lists	Oregon
Lack of knowledge/unrealistic worker expectations—peer counseling, use of organized labor	Pennsylvania, Illinois, Michigan
Employer reluctance—collaboration with employers	Michigan
Lack of knowledge — multiple tools and channels	Washington
Lack of knowledge and unrealistic worker expectations - social networking	Washington, California
Lack of system capacity - reorganized intake process	Pennsylvania, California
Lack of system capacity - inclusive service planning	Oregon
Lack of knowledge – assistance to limited English proficient population	Oregon
<b>Retention</b>	
Lack of system capacity – outreach triggered by checklists for staff and participants	California
Lack of system capacity – outreach triggered through an integrated management information	Massachusetts
Lack of system capacity – enhanced contact information	South Dakota

Exhibit I-3 graphically shows the relationships between categories and problem types in a flow chart for a typical TAA program.

## Key Assumptions, Terminology, and Organization of this Report

Several important assumptions in this report should be noted:

- The focus of this paper is primarily on the cooperating state agencies that administer the program, though labor organizations that play a formal role in outreach through contracts with the states or grants from ETA are also discussed. While other interested and responsible parties—employers, unions, and elected officials—often file petitions and play important roles in improving TAA enrollment, time constraints precluded data collection from such respondents.
- In general, the paper excludes practices directly associated with Rapid Response, such as suggesting to the employer or union that they file a petition. SPR’s previous research on the connections between Rapid Response and TAA makes it very clear that all states raise the prospect of TAA petitioning and enrollment during Rapid Response regularly, if not universally.<sup>2</sup>

The following terms are used to describe processes, practices, or program features:

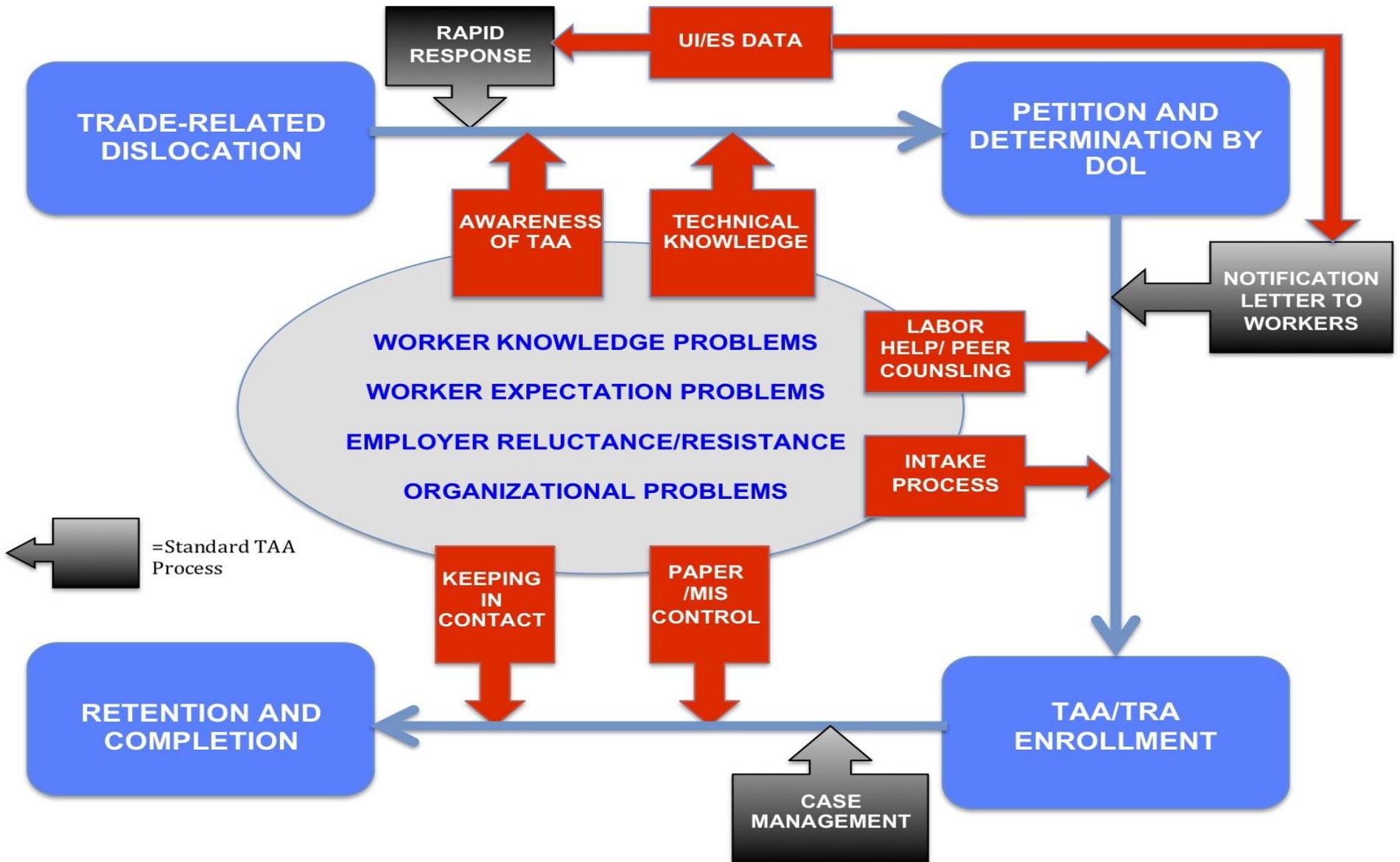
- The TAA enrollment or “**take-up rate**” is defined as the proportion of eligible workers who became **participants** by virtue of receiving a significant benefit or service in the TAA program.
- “**Non-participants**” are TAA-eligible workers in a group certified as having been affected by trade-related layoffs but who did not receive a major benefit or service in TAA.
- The “**certified worker list**” is a list of names and often contact information for eligible workers who were affected by a specific dislocation certified by ETA as being trade-related. This list is usually provided by the employer.
- The formal orientation to Unemployment Insurance (UI) is referred to as the “**Benefit Rights Interview**,” a term that some states use.
- The term “**wage insurance**” is used to describe subsidies provided to certain older TAA participants who are able to find jobs paying less than a certain amount.

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<sup>2</sup> Jeffrey Salzman, *Rapid Response and TAA: A Report Prepared As Part of the Evaluation of the Trade Adjustment Assistance Act* (2009), [http://wdr.doleta.gov/research/FullText\\_Documents/Rapid Response and TAA - Final Report.pdf](http://wdr.doleta.gov/research/FullText_Documents/Rapid%20Response%20and%20TAA%20-%20Final%20Report.pdf).

The report includes three chapters, corresponding to the three broad objectives of outreach: petition filing, participant enrollment, and retention. Within each chapter, specific practices are described, as are results regarding the practice, as available. Summary observations on common themes, challenges in expanding and improving outreach, and examples of practices that seem most likely to be effective are provided in the final chapter.

Exhibit I-3  
 Problems and Potentially Promising Practices in Customer Flow in TAA





## II. OUTREACH PRACTICES TO PROMOTE PETITION-FILING

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Unlike most workforce programs where participation reflects an individual's decision, access to TAA occurs only after a multi-step process. TAA requires certification of a worker group as the first step to enrollment and, thus, state workforce agencies, worker groups, or other responsible and interested parties (who must be aware of or learn about the program) must file a petition. Then, ETA must certify that trade has contributed to the dislocation in an important way. In addition, employees of labor-leasing firms and secondary worker groups (suppliers and those at downstream firms that finish goods) may be eligible, but many states reported that they have proved hard to identify.

Even though the petition application is a very simple two-page form requiring no technical information, the evidence from SPR's implementation studies on TAA and Rapid Response makes it clear that TAA is little known, except in communities that have been severely affected by trade in the past. Thus, if states are to increase the total number of petitions filed, a significant challenge is to inform workers and employers, who are the most frequent filers, about TAA.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter discusses practices to promote increased numbers of petitions and providing technical assistance that will increase the likelihood that petitions, once filed, will be certified. In proceeding, we have identified potentially promising practices that address several types of underlying problems, including those relating to basic knowledge that the program even exists, as well as employer reluctance and lack of workforce system capacity.

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<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, no data are collected by the government—Federal or otherwise—on the specific factors that contribute to mass layoffs and plant closings. Thus, the potential number of dislocations and workers who might qualify for TAA is unknown. The Bureau of Labor Statistics does collect information on movement of work to other countries through its Mass Layoff Statistics program. However, that data collection effort covers only dislocations where 50 or more claims are filed against an employer in any five-week period.

## Mining Administrative Data to Identify Dislocations

Worker groups and employers may go through dislocations without being aware of the workforce investment system and its services, including TAA. In addition, some employers may not wish to provide a notice that would reveal publicly that they are laying off workers, especially if they are shifting production overseas. Even if state Rapid Response teams have excellent early warning systems, these knowledge and employer reluctance problems can leave out potentially trade-eligible worker groups.

To identify trade-affected workers, a number of states are analyzing administrative data sources such as UI claims and Employment Service (ES) mandatory registrations by claimants to identify dislocations generally, with possible TAA petitioning as a corollary. Several states studied, including New York, Texas, and Kentucky, review UI claims against firms to determine whether a Rapid Response is appropriate, even if a firm has not filed a notice required by the Worker Adjustment Retraining Notification Act (WARN) or other notice. Once Rapid Response occurs, nearly all states (as we learned from the implementation visits) ask the employer (and union) if there has been any potential trade impact, and, if there appears to have been, they encourage the filing of a petition by the employer, union, worker group, or the state or local workforce agency. Most of these states indicated that they file, even if there is only a small chance that the petition will be certified.

**New York** identifies potential dislocations, including those that may be trade-related, by examining data from UI claims and on visits to One-Stop Career Centers (where UI claimants must register) to identify potential dislocations. The State Workforce Agency data center provides weekly reports identifying employers that have shown a 20 percent reduction in employment levels, regardless of size. This is particularly important for identifying dislocations at small employers and small dislocations from large employers that do not cross the thresholds for WARN. The state prepares two separate reports: one on claims or One-Stop Career Center visits from workers laid off from an employer at any of the employer's establishments in the state, and another that identifies reductions occurring at specific sites. The latter report targets locations for multi-site employers whose layoffs meet the 20-percent-reduction threshold only at a single site but not statewide. Such identification is especially important in small communities. When a potential dislocation is flagged, the information is given to the Rapid Response coordinator for the area, who immediately arranges for a visit to the employer, and, during the visit, explores a possible trade impact. If trade impact is at all possible, the coordinator encourages the employer to file a petition. Employer filing is preferred because the employer then becomes more likely to provide information to ETA investigators. If the employer is unable or unwilling to file, the state uses the ES data to contact workers to file and as a last resort, the state will file the petition itself.

**Results.** While the full process in New York was only put into effect in June 2011, the system identified an average of 23 dislocations per month in the first two months; however, no information on potential trade impacts had yet been discovered.

## **Use of Multiple Methods – Website, Telephone Hotline, and Brochures**

Outreach to increase petition filing can involve broadly informing all potentially interested parties (workers, employers, and communities) as well as targeting specific firms and worker groups who are undergoing, or are at risk of, dislocations. Coordination with labor, employer groups, and community agencies can expand awareness of the TAA program. The most comprehensive example of this occurred in the State of **Washington**, where the Washington State Labor Council (WSLC) has provided technical assistance to the TAA program and dislocated workers for over 25 years. Through a contract from the State Workforce Agency, WSLC provides a wide range of services to dislocated workers, including TAA-specific services to increase enrollment for both union and non-union dislocations. In 2010, WSLC, in partnership with the state agency, received one of the three ETA grants for TAA outreach, and those funds have been used to supplement ongoing activities under the state contract.

Broad outreach has been provided by WSLC through a website ( <http://www.taa-washington.org>) and a toll-free telephone number (866-TAA-3399) that function to inform any interested party about the TAA petition process. The website provides basic information on how to file a petition, a PDF version of the petition, and a hyperlink to ETA’s filing instructions (see Exhibit II-1). There are also links to TAA eligibility requirements, available benefits, a glossary of TAA and UI acronyms, and links to other workforce and training websites. The telephone hotline is a toll-free number that is answered by staff members during normal business hours. Callers at other times can leave a message with a call-back phone number. Finally, a brochure that uses the same color scheme and basic message as the website is available and has been widely distributed through the partnerships (see Exhibit II-2).

**Results.** WSLC reported widespread use of these resources, but the direct effect on petition filing is not known.

## **Frequent Meetings with Partner Organizations**

In **Washington** in past years, the WSLC convened a coalition of partners and stakeholders to facilitate better leads for petitions. WSLC has held two rounds of eight regional meetings with staff from One-Stop Career Centers, community colleges, economic development agencies, and employer and labor organizations. The agenda for these meetings included reviewing pending

petitions, identifying additional firms that may be trade eligible and explaining situations where it is difficult to prove the adverse effect of foreign competition.

As the coalition developed, partners offered WSLC suggestions for other organizations to invite to the table. A key to successful partnerships has been the sharing of information with multiple layers of staff within a partner organization. Consequently, WSLC held the first round of regional meetings for managers and the second round of regional meetings for front-line staff, with additional staff meetings for specific partners held at partner request. In some meetings, 40 to 50 staff members have been present. As part of their work with partners, WSLC has provided educational materials covering topics such as key questions to ask workers and details on the supply chain and how companies along that chain might be TAA eligible. Finally, WSLC produces a bi-weekly newsletter on TAA that is distributed to over 200 contacts.

The main obstacle WSLC has encountered to implementing this strategy is getting a more diverse group of organizations to participate. WSLC suspects that some organizations do not see the benefit to them in joining in the partnership discussions.

**Results.** WSLC respondents reported that partnership meetings have been very helpful because some partners do not know about TAA and others know about the program but not about petitions for secondary firms or the possibility of reconsideration or appeal. The partnership meetings have resulted in an increase of potential petitioners being referred to WSLC for assistance, but there are no data on whether this has resulted in an increase in petitions.

Exhibit II-1  
Washington State Labor Council TAA Website Home Page

Search

# Accessing Trade Adjustment Assistance in Washington State

TAAProgram@wslc.org  
866.TAA.3399

**It's easy to blame the economy and harder to identify global competition, but ask yourself...**

**Menu**

- Home
- About TAA
- TAA Benefits ▶
- TAA For Firms
- Filing A Petition
- Criteria
- TAA Enrollment
- Active Certifications
- Other Support ▶
- About Us & Our Services
- Glossary of Acronyms
- Other Links
- Contact Us

**July 15, 2011**

Please note: this website provides information about the TAA program and others in basic, understandable terms. The guidelines for accessing benefits can be complicated. Official federal and state resources can be found under TAA Benefits.

[Website Survey](#)

Share this via Facebook:

*Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) provides support to laid off workers and downsizing businesses impacted by jobs leaving the USA or foreign products making it hard to compete. The benefits provided by TAA are substantial.*

*We are here to help you evaluate the impact of foreign trade and outsourcing on local industries (which is not always obvious!) and access TAA benefits and other support in Washington State.*

**Did -or will- your company:**

- Move production outside of the USA;
- Outsource jobs outside of the USA;
- Compete with foreign companies;
- Import from foreign suppliers; OR,
- Supply customers impacted by foreign competition?

**If the answer is yes...**

- [What is TAA and how do I access these benefits?](#)
- [Is it possible my company is already certified?](#)
- [How can my company access layoff aversion support?](#)

**If the answer is no...**

- [What other reemployment, training, and community support is available?](#)

**Benefits may include:**

- Health coverage subsidy
- Fully funded training
- Extended income support
- Job search assistance
- Relocation assistance
- Wage subsidy for older workers
- Layoff aversion funds for affected firms

**IMPORTANT BENEFIT INFORMATION:**

Effective Feb. 15, 2011 petitions can not be filed for service sector layoffs and petitions certified after this date provide slightly different benefits.

This website currently lists benefits available to petitions filed before Feb. 15. Congress continue to debate these changes. For more information [contact us](#) or visit the [USDOL website](#).

This information is provided by a U.S. Department of Labor grant to the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO in partnership with the Washington State Employment Security Department to provide enhanced technical assistance in the TAA program to all Washington workers and employers, union and non-union. The USDOL makes no assurances of any kind with respect to its content.

Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO  
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[Login](#)

Exhibit II-2  
Washington TAA Brochure



**Laid off?  
Downsizing?**

**Re-evaluate**  
your situation

**ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE MAY BE AVAILABLE**

It's easy to blame the economy  
and harder to identify global competition  
but ask yourself...

**Did –or will– your company:**

- Move production to another country;
- Outsource services to another country;
- Compete with foreign companies;
- Import from foreign suppliers; OR,
- Supply customers impacted by foreign competition of goods or services?

**If so, TAA\* benefits may be available and can provide:**

- Funding for up to 156 weeks of approved training
- 80% health care subsidy
- Extended weekly income support
- \$1500 for out-of-area job search costs
- \$1500 to relocate for suitable employment
- 50% wage subsidy for workers over 50
- Layoff aversion funds for affected firms

**For more information:**

- visit [WWW.TAA-WASHINGTON.ORG](http://WWW.TAA-WASHINGTON.ORG)
- call 1-866-TAA-3399



This information is provided by a U.S. Department of Labor grant to the WA State Labor Council, AFL-CIO in partnership with the WA State Employment Security Department. The USDOL makes no assurances of any kind with respect to its content.

opeiu8/afl-cio

**\*The TAA program is federally funded. There is no direct cost to the worker or employer.**

## Town Hall Meetings with Workers and Communities

Town hall meetings were used by the national AFL-CIO Working for America Institute and the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM), under ETA grants to broaden awareness of TAA among local union officers and staff and workers. The IAM meetings were designed to inform community-based organizations and local elected officials who may be helpful in future dislocations. The union organized several meetings in Wisconsin, using meeting space in the community (including libraries and bowling alleys) and announcing meetings through emails to local union staff and officers, public service announcements, and flyers in supermarkets. One obstacle has been its limited contacts with TAA program administrators and One-Stop Career Center staff, up to the time that the data were collected.

**Results.** The IAM had at least one meeting in Milwaukee that stimulated several worker groups to file petitions. In these cases, the employers were strongly opposed to the filings, so IAM's efforts appear critical. Overall, however, other community events have thus far proved more difficult to organize, and turnout was light at the IAM's Wisconsin events. However, the union expects that as partnerships with state and local workforce agencies and employer groups emerge and local and central bodies learn more about these town hall meetings, they will have greater success.

## Centralized Technical Assistance for Petition Filing

In nearly all states, petition filing is a decentralized activity and there is usually little statewide coordination. However, there is a wide variety of petition-filers with varying levels of motivation, staff resources and knowledge about TAA or the requirements for a successful petition in most states. Two states, as described below, decided to centralize and coordinate petition-filing, to the extent possible, in order to provide additional resources and provide consistent, expert information.

The **Washington** State Workforce Agency has long recognized that lack of staff resources is an enduring obstacle to solving petition-filing problems in a comprehensive way. To address the structural resource problem, the state asked WSLC, as part of its contract, to provide petition assistance to union companies and to extend this service to non-union petitions (as a result of requests for help from One-Stop Career Centers). WSLC helps with petitions for companies of any size or industry, and the organization reports it assists with about 75 percent of petitions in the state. The WSLC petition-support process typically includes the following steps:

- Conduct research to provide supporting evidence for the petitions with explanatory data from TradeStats Express (a simplified, freely accessible database of statistics on foreign trade) and trade cases from the Departments of Commerce, U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission reports, business magazines, and competitors' websites;

- Make comparisons to previous petitions of a similar kind;
- Encourage letters of support from businesses organizations and compile layoff letters from workers;
- Encourage letters of support from local elected officials and the Congressional delegation; and
- Collaborate with ETA investigators throughout the petition process to supply additional data or address technical issues that may arise.

The research has been especially important for petitions in the forest products industry, a very important Washington industry because it has been challenging to demonstrate that imports of like products have increased and that they contributed importantly to worker dislocation. The WSLC also works on appeals for petitions that have initially been rejected.

Respondents mentioned two obstacles to further petition support. They noted that it is hard to assist with very small layoffs because the One-Stop Career Centers are not as willing to respond in these cases. WSLC also noted that it is sometimes difficult to get information from the affected company, for example when the company has been bought out and the legal department of the parent company will not allow the old management to provide information, or when companies do not want to admit that they have been affected by foreign competition.

**Results.** WSLC respondents stated that they have experienced good outcomes with both the petitions and the appeals on which they have worked. The petition data support this contention, revealing that Washington's petition success rate for all petitioners in calendar years 2007 to 2010 was better than the national average. In this span of time, the state had 76 percent of its petitions certified, compared to 66 percent nationally. The union organization believes that its information is effective in supporting the DOL investigation. Finally, letters of support from local elected officials and the Congressional delegation were thought to aid in mobilizing support for an effective community response to worker dislocation, which is important whether the petition is certified or not.

**Pennsylvania** has adopted a policy to centralize and coordinate petition filing through its state Rapid Response capability. If there are no other filers, the state acts as a petitioner on behalf of trade-affected workers. This coordination and state-as-petitioner practice was developed in response to two problems: 1) some Local Workforce Investment Areas (LWIAs) did not file petitions because they were unaware of their authority to file; and 2) miscommunication between the state and local levels within the workforce investment system led to failure to file or duplicate filings. The process started as an informal policy and is now working its way through the system to become formalized, a process involving input from all workforce system stakeholders.

Under the policy, any dislocated workers or other parties inquiring about TAA are referred to the regional Rapid Response coordinator who investigates other options for filing a trade petition before resorting to the state becoming the petitioner. If there are no better alternatives, the coordinator files the petition and notifies all relevant parties. State filing is a last resort because the state believes that this practice is not as effective as filings by companies or unions, who are more likely to provide good information to ETA and will be more responsive in enrollment if the petition is certified.

**Results.** The result from this practice has been a slight increase in the number of petitions filed. Of the 779 petitions filed in Pennsylvania over the period from 2007 to 2010, the state filed 14. Although the Rapid Response staff believed that the petitions they filed were not as likely to be certified for TAA, their approval rate was very similar to the approval rate for all Pennsylvania petitions and was comparable to the national average for the same period.

## **Adding TAA Information to UI Seminars for Employers**

Data from TAA evaluation site visits found that some employers are reluctant or resistant to filing petitions or in supporting their workers or unions in filing. Experiences under the ETA grants provided additional evidence of this (the IAM-Wisconsin project reported that several employers were angered when they found out that their laid-off employees, who learned about the program from a union-sponsored town hall meeting, had filed a TAA petition). Most states typically address this problem through Rapid Response activities, but this intervention may not be sufficient or it may come too late to persuade an employer to file. Starting in 2010, the **Michigan** TAA program began to provide information about TAA to a wide variety of employers who were convened by the UI program to learn more about how the UI system operates, their UI obligations for taxation and reporting, and benefits available to workers. The state recently added a general overview of the TAA program to educate employers about TAA as a source of help for workers when layoffs are necessary.

**Results.** In 2010, 1496 employer staff members attended the seminars. The TAA coordinator believes that the seminars have overcome some employer misunderstanding, and that this will promote filing and that employers will likely provide more support during ETA investigations.

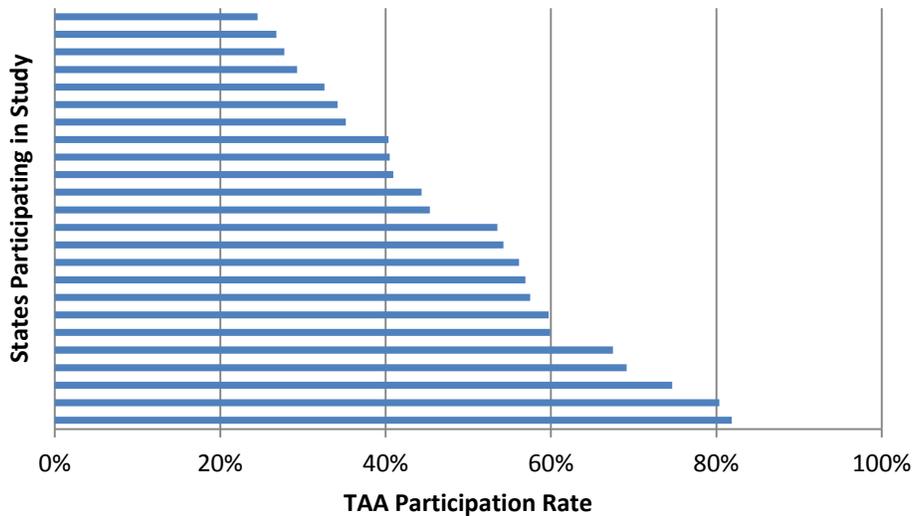


### III. OUTREACH PRACTICES TO INCREASE ENROLLMENT

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Outreach to increase program enrollment must address multiple issues, including, as noted earlier: workers’ lack of knowledge and unrealistic expectations; employers’ reluctance or lack of capacity; and organizational limitations in the workforce system. Stronger outreach may be of use to address the significant percentage of eligible workers who are unaware of their eligibility for TAA or of how to apply to the program, as found in the survey of eligible workers conducted for the larger TAA evaluation. Further, workers’ lack of knowledge about the program and weak outreach may be responsible for the wide variation in take-up across the United States as found in the TAA evaluation (see Exhibit III-1).

**Exhibit III-1  
State Take-up Rates**



*Source: Administrative data from 25 state from the TAA evaluations. States are not identified pursuant to confidentiality agreements under which data were collected.*

During other rounds of data collection for the evaluation’s process study, researchers found that front-line staff frequently noted that dislocated workers, who were typically deeply anxious over their job losses, had a hard time understanding and remembering TAA requirements presented

during Rapid Response events, UI benefit rights interviews, and other interventions. This led some workers to ignore the program or miss key deadlines.

Further, some workers, often those most in need of help, are in denial that a job loss is permanent and believe they may be recalled or relocated by the layoff employer. Occasionally, these expectations are fulfilled, but for others, these expectation delays readjustment and can preclude receipt of TAA services or benefits. Also, some employers resist allowing on-site orientations and enrollment, which increases the difficulty of informing and enrolling workers. Some firms do not provide certified worker lists that are accurate and up-to-date or—in relatively few cases—any at all.

Enrollment may also be hampered by states' lack of staff and resources to conduct effective outreach because of limited funds and state budgetary constraints. Case managers, although typically helpful and sympathetic, may be distrusted by some workers. Finally, workers may be harder to reach when access to TAA is delayed while they await certification decisions. While ETA has been quite successful in making timely certification decisions, which on average has consistently been less than the 40-day target established in law, some determinations take longer, such as when complexities arise in the investigation process.

This section presents several potentially promising approaches that states have used to address some of the problems noted above. However, it is essential to recognize that some problems caused by workers' perceptions, such as their expectations of being recalled to their high-paying jobs with good benefits, may not be susceptible to any practices from the workforce investment system or its labor partners.

## **Mining Administrative Data to Find Certified Workers**

To notify a worker of his or her eligibility for TAA, state program staff need to know the worker's name and contact information. Staff typically ask the employer of the covered worker group to provide a list of worker in the certified group. However, in some cases, a firm does not provide a list, either because of reluctance or because it is out of business, otherwise unable to provide the list, or does not have accurate up-to-date information (particularly when rolling layoffs occur). To address the lack of certified workers lists, **Oregon** TAA agency staff members use the state UI wage record system to build the list. If the ETA certification covers all workers at the firm, then TAA staff members download the list of workers from wage records, obtain the workers' addresses from UI claimant files, and send letters informing the workers of their eligibility for TAA. If only part of the firm's workforce is certified, letters are sent to all workers, but the workers must furnish some evidence that they are part of the eligible worker group. A major challenge was obtaining addresses for eligible workers who are not claimants either because they have not yet been laid off or because they elected not to file a claim.

The key element in this practice was that the wage record system is readily accessible to TAA staff through Oracle's Business Intelligence reporting software which is used to query the wage record database (usually based on simple matching of the employer identification number) to extract a list of workers. The list is then matched against the claims and ES registrant files to obtain the workers' addresses. The final step is to merge the extracted data (for those that are claimants or ES registrants) through macros and mail merge, to create letters that are transmitted to the agency's print/mailing shop, which sends them out. All work is done by the state TAA staff, and there are no agreements to be negotiated or requests to overwhelmed UI programmers.

**Results.** Oregon used this procedure in about 5 to 10 percent of certifications. No estimates are available for whether there was any difference in enrollment rates for worker lists assembled this way compared to the conventional employer-supplied lists.

## **Multiple Methods – Website, Hotline, Brochures and Advertising**

As with its multiple approaches to increase petition-filing, the **Washington** State workforce agency, through its contract and collaboration with WSLC, also used multiple methods to increase enrollment. These include a website (described earlier), which provides basic information on TAA benefits and how to enroll in the program and a map with hyperlinks to contact information for a named TAA coordinator in each One-Stop Career Center that has TAA staff members present. The website includes a table with a list of all TAA certified dislocations in the state, with hyperlinks to ETA certifications for some of them. The table includes a column indicating whether leased workers are included among the eligible workers. The telephone hotline is also available, consisting of a toll-free number that is answered by live staff members during normal business hours. Callers at other times can leave a message with a call-back phone number.

The state agency and WSLC collaborate on a public relations strategy. Both organizations announce TAA services to certified workers at specific sites through paid and public service advertisements in local print and broadcast media. These are typically more successful in rural areas with more limited media outlets because residents, including eligible workers, are more likely to see the advertising that appears. However, an advertisement placed in a Tacoma newspaper targeting workers from three separate companies also generated a "decent volume" of responses from the workers. As a result of the Tacoma success, the state agency has decided to issue press releases on a regular basis to local newspapers and radio and television stations.

WSLC also developed a follow-up letter to the initial mailing by the State Workforce Agency, sent to workers on the certified worker list <sup>4</sup> and inaugurated two efforts to use social networking as an outreach strategy in recruiting eligible workers (this effort is discussed fully later in the chapter).

**Results.** No information was available on the effect of using these methods.

## Use of Organized Labor

Labor organizations have played a major role in many states not only in outreach related to petition-filing (as noted in Chapter II), but also in increasing worker enrollment once a petition has been certified. Labor organizations can mobilize members for peer counseling, publicize TAA through union meetings and newsletters, and provide planning advice to address the full range of workers' knowledge and expectation problems. A number of states whose practices were nominated for this study (including Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, New York, Michigan, Montana, Oregon, Pennsylvania and Washington) had contracts or working relationships with organized labor to help with responses to all dislocations, including those that are trade related. Other research on TAA and Rapid Response confirms that such contracts or working relationships are commonly used in many other states.

Here we highlight **Michigan**, whose local unions were instrumental in contacting their members to help the members understand the importance of registering for TAA. Local officials and staff also help workers understand the relationship between severance packages and TRA benefits, which can be complex and involve important timing issues. In Michigan, their involvement and impact has been important in large-scale automotive dislocations, where the local union presence is critical in mobilizing employer support for activities that increase TAA enrollment. The state TAA coordinator noted that attendance rates at outreach sessions increase dramatically if unions are involved.

Involvement from the national levels in the labor movement was also used to increase enrollment. The TAA program in the state has very good relations with the national United Auto Workers (UAW) and the state AFL-CIO. Until mid-2011, the state contracted with the state labor federation's workforce unit to provide peer counseling (discussed below) and other outreach services to dislocated workers, including those who were TAA-eligible. To supplement

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<sup>4</sup> However, the letter could not be used because of confidentiality restrictions on disclosing the certified worker list to a third party. California also faced confidentiality restrictions in its efforts to use the LWIAs to send out follow-up letters and make follow-up telephone calls. In this case, some employers objected that disclosure to the LWIAs violated the confidentiality pledges that were taken by employers who furnished the certified worker lists.

its previous work, the state labor federation has a sub-grant from the national AFL-CIO's Working for America outreach grant. Under that grant, the state federation's workforce arm has surveyed union officials about their awareness of TAA. The goal of the survey is identify the training needs of local union leaders regarding TAA, to get information to help design and organize the community outreach meeting (to increase general awareness and enrollment at specific certified dislocations) and to use local union contacts to encourage employer cooperation once enrollment begins.<sup>5</sup>

**Results.** The TAA coordinator noted that collaboration with labor appeared to contribute to gains in enrollment rates. The state achieved its highest take-up levels since the program began, reaching about 95 percent of eligible workers in some dislocations in fiscal year 2010 (which was higher than in prior years).

## Peer Counseling

A variety of knowledge gaps and unrealistic expectations make it difficult for many workers to understand TAA requirements, know how to apply, and adjust to the often-harsh realities of the labor market. While TAA staff members in One-Stop Career Centers have excellent technical knowledge and are welcoming and sympathetic, it is common for some affected workers who are undergoing the trauma of job loss to be suspicious of outsiders, even those whose job it is to be helpful. Peer counseling, in which workers from an affected plant are responsible for assisting their fellow workers through the adjustment process, has been used since the mid-1980s in many states. The basic principle underlying this strategy is that peer counselors both have access to dislocated workers and will be a trusted source of advice. The method was developed by the labor movement and its allies in response to a disastrous 1981 closing of a General Motors assembly plant in Fremont, California, that resulted in numerous suicides.

Peer counseling has often been funded with state and local Rapid Response money, and has involved contracts with state labor federations, as in Illinois, Michigan, Washington, and other states. The practice has been used more frequently in unionized plants. In the states noted above, the labor federation hires and trains dislocated workers from the affected workforce as peer counselors. Although seven states (Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and Washington) were nominated for their use of peer counseling, this report focuses on just two examples: one in Pennsylvania, where state and local Rapid Response staff manage the peer counseling process, and the other in Michigan, where peer counseling is delivered through a state labor organization.

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<sup>5</sup> Similar survey efforts are occurring in most of the eight states in which the Working for America grant operates.

In **Pennsylvania**, local workforce areas hire peer counselors when planning services that will be provided to a company and its workers prior to a mass layoff. The Rapid Response Unit takes the lead in bringing the workforce system partners together and coordinating the planning process. Peer counselors are trained on the workforce system and are employed for ten hours per week with funds from the local dislocated worker allocation and Rapid Response funds. Peer counselors' frequent contact with eligible workers is often necessary to get across the details about the variety of services available from the TAA program and its One-Stop Career Center partners. Further, the trust that inheres in their common status as laid off workers typically helps to assuage fears and allows peer counselors to explain how TAA services may be helpful to very disheartened workers who may want to avoid dealing with job search or training. Respondents indicate that dislocated workers respond much better to their former co-workers than to government employees, regardless of the latter's knowledge and professional skills. Further, the peer counselors' outreach work created an effective division of labor that allows TAA case managers and other One-Stop Career Center staff members to focus on counseling, meeting deadlines, and other aspects of service delivery.

Pennsylvania used peer counselors only for large layoffs, typically of at least 400 workers. The state's only modification to this practice since its implementation has been to provide better training to peer counselors so that they are clear about their roles and boundaries and who they report to. The main obstacle to its further implementation is resistance from some local workforce areas unwilling to fund the counselors.

**Results.** State respondents indicated that they have much better enrollment when they are able to use peer counselors. An application of this strategy in a dislocation in the borough of Olyphant (described in more detail later in this chapter) illustrates the importance of peer counseling connected to an enhanced intake process, which yielded a 75 percent TAA take-up rate, greatly exceeding the typical TAA take-up rate in the state. Non-participants included retirees, voluntary quits, and disabled individuals. As further evidence of the success of this strategy, the 170 workers had been laid off before TAA certification, and who did not receive peer counseling, had much lower participation rates

In **Michigan** the state labor organization hired workers as peer counselors, trained them, and paid them (under its Rapid Response contract). Peer counseling was typically limited to 30-90 days,, but the outreach efforts to workers might continue if a longer period was needed.

**Results.** A regional coordinator for the Michigan state AFL-CIO's workforce unit noted that in three trade dislocations affecting 500 workers, about 80 percent of workers had enrolled, which

she attributed to the use of peer counseling. However, peer counseling was not sufficient to overcome deeply-held negative expectations in the layoffs in 2006 and 2010 at Delphi (the former General Motors in-house parts supplier) in Flint, Michigan, as described in Exhibit III-2.

## **Exhibit III-2 Case Study**

### **Peer Counseling to Promote Take-up in Flint, Michigan**

**Context:** A mass layoff of 2,800 workers at the Delphi Auto Parts and the United Auto Workers in Flint, Michigan, in 2006 reduced the plant to 1,200. A second worker group lost their jobs in 2010, as production was shifted to Mexico and China. Production workers, skilled trades, and maintenance employees all lost jobs. Workers varied greatly in educational levels, from less than high school to those with four-year degrees. Workers were relatively older in the first layoff, where wages were around \$28/hour. The second layoff included younger, second-tier workers (hired after Delphi's bankruptcy and re-negotiation of its contract) who were paid about \$14/hour.

#### **Problems Encountered**

- Frequent recalls, even as the plant downsized.
- Under the UAW contract, a small number of workers could exercise seniority and obtain jobs in certain nearby General Motors' facilities.
- Interest in training was very low, even among younger workers

#### **Process**

Under its Rapid Response contract from the state, the Michigan labor organization hired four local union officials to act as peer counselors with responsibility for encouraging workers to enroll in TAA. The company provided its list of workers' contact information to supplement the union's own lists, but otherwise did not provide any services or benefits. The four counselors divided the list of all laid-off workers and called each one to invite him or her to one of several orientations to be held in the UAW hall. They were able to reach most workers by telephone and sent letters to those who did not respond to phone calls. No further peer counseling was reported.

#### **Results**

Enrollment rates were generally disappointing. Despite the efforts of the peer counselors, notices and articles in the local union newsletter, and public service announcements in the local media, only about 20 to 25 percent of the eligible workers ever attended any of the many orientation meetings. The older workers indicated that they had no interest in training and expected to retire soon. While these workers expected to get low-paying jobs that would tide them over, they rejected enrollment to obtain a wage supplement from the TAA alternative wage insurance program for older workers. Younger workers, whose proportion increased in the 2010 layoff, also resisted TAA enrollment, as they were deeply discouraged by a challenging labor market.

Most workers were deeply pessimistic about their future prospects in the Flint labor market, which is well-known for the disastrous impact of dislocations in the auto industry.<sup>6</sup> Workers close to retirement planned to retire and take retail or other low-paying jobs to sustain them until they could collect a pension and Social Security. Even many younger workers for whom TAA training was more plausible rejected peer counselor admonitions and did not come to orientations or enroll. Low expectations may have been quite widespread in Michigan, which endured an unemployment rate almost 50 percent above the national average since 2006, and has about 117,000 unredeemed letters of TAA training eligibility.<sup>7</sup>

## Social Networking

Encouraging participation, whether through staff work or peer counseling, is a very labor-intensive process and, as the Michigan case study demonstrates, it does not always yield a successful result. To address this problem, at least two states are now using social networking tools to improve their outreach. In some sense, this updates a very traditional—and often highly effective—outreach method, word-of-mouth. The possibility for viral spread makes social networking a potentially even more powerful tool particularly after a layoff occurs, because the common locus of the workplace is gone. In addition, outreach through social networking is likely to be very cost effective.

**Washington's** state federation established a **Facebook page** to provide TAA-related education materials and to offer a platform for workers from a certified group who had accessed workforce services to become “friends” of the page and share their experiences with others. The page contains basic information on TAA program services and hyperlinks to One-Stop Career Centers in counties where petitions have been certified. The “wall,” the Facebook component for leaving public messages and other postings, lists active petitions, which link back to the main page. The state federation hopes that eligible workers will view the page and link to it, so that their Facebook “friends” will subsequently see the icon for the page and link to it as well. Thus, the information could spread in viral fashion. It is estimated that 70,000,000 Americans over age 16 are on Facebook, and thus this represents a significant opportunity to market the program very widely at almost no additional cost beyond the minimal time it takes to create or update the

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<sup>6</sup> Throughout the period of these layoffs, Flint experienced among the highest unemployment rates of any metropolitan area.

<sup>7</sup> Likewise, Alaska has over 8,000 outstanding letters of eligibility, primarily from oil industry certifications from 1997 to 2005. The state recently made an effort to remind those workers of their eligibility through press releases and postcards sent to the last known addresses. The response was dismal—hardly surprising, given the long time since the certifications occurred.

Facebook page. Exhibit III-3 displays this Facebook page with the names redacted to protect privacy.

### Exhibit III-3: Washington State Labor Council TAA Facebook Page

## TAA Washington

Helping laid off workers and downsizing businesses at [Washington State Labor Council](#)

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*Education and Work*

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### Employers



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#### Washington State Labor Council

Helping laid off workers and downsizing businesses

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**866-TAA-3399 / [www.TAA-Washington.org](http://www.TAA-Washington.org)**

We are here to help workers and employers file for and access TAA benefits in Washington state.

**US Department of Labor grant**

These resources are funded by a USDOL grant to the Washington State Labor Council in partnership with the Employment Security Department and supported by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

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*Activities and Interests*

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### Other

[WorkSource Snohomish County](#), [Washington State Labor Council](#), [Washington State Board for Community & Technical Colleges](#), [U.S. Department of Labor](#), [UCubed](#), [The Stand](#)

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*Basic Information*

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### About TAA

Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) provides superior benefits to any other displaced worker program. Workers and firms that are adversely affected by foreign trade or competition may access:

- Health care subsidy
- Occupational training
- Income support
- Job search assistance
- Relocation assistance
- Layoff aversion funds

Foreign competition can be difficult to identify, but ask yourself...  
Did - or will - your company:

- Move production outside the USA;
- Outsource work to another country;
- Compete with foreign companies;
- Import from foreign suppliers; OR,
- Supply customers impacted by foreign competition?

For assistance, contact us: [www.TAA-Washington.org](http://www.TAA-Washington.org) / 866-TAA-3399.

The state federation has also linked the page to other platforms such as LinkedIn and YouTube and staff members created a YouTube video that provides an overview of TAA. It is anticipated that the YouTube linkage will increase traffic to the website.

**Result.** The state federation has only recently established the Facebook page and staff members indicated that it has not yet been successful in reaching workers. An inspection of the page by an SPR staff member in July 2011 found only 41 “friends” of the page, and over half of these specifically identified themselves as union officers or staff members, elected officials and their staff members, or workforce system employees. Respondents were not sure why the page had not been widely shared, but they recognize that there is a learning curve to understanding how to use technology applications.

A wider search through Google revealed two instances in which worker groups themselves had created TAA-related Facebook pages. In Richland Center, Wisconsin, at a Rockwell Automation dislocation, a Facebook page with 75 friends, a wall, and discussion groups had been established by employees to share information about TAA. Participants were sharing technical information about the program’s services, although there was no direct evidence of outreach to promote enrollment. In the case of the closing of the New United Motors Manufacturing Incorporated (the Toyota-General Motors joint venture, known as NUMMI), 10 people had “friended” a page called NUMMI Love (established by a worker, according to state staff), but no program-related information was displayed. Rather, there were links to individuals’ own pages, which displayed personal information about their hobbies, pets, and other things not related to TAA. The NUMMI dislocation is discussed later in this chapter.

Another example of social networks can be seen in **California’s plans to use Twitter** to improve outreach. TAA staff in Southern California will send out “tweets” when ETA issues a certification and when the state holds orientations or intake sessions. This is part of a broader initiative by the State Workforce Agency that allows local staff to post immediate, timely information regarding events and basic program information without any additional clearance (other types of information must be submitted to the public affairs office for clearance before posting). Twitter permits posting of links to other information within their 140-character limit, and the state hopes that eligible workers and others who can spread the word about TAA will become followers, and relay information to people who follow the initial tier of followers, known as “retweeting.” As Twitter claims that there are 200,000,000 registered users worldwide who post 400,000,000 tweets per day, there is potential for a viral spread of enrollment information.

**Results.** Final approval of this effort by the state agency management was still pending at the time the report was written, so no results are available. However, the State Workforce Agency’s

UI division has been using Twitter to spread UI program information since 2010. Retweets appear to be very common in those posts.

## Enhanced Intake Processes

The path to TAA enrollment is strewn with knowledge and expectation obstacles that may resist the best-designed practices. But organizational obstacles, such as a lack of a well-structured intake procedure or having insufficient staff to provide timely and effective intake, are matters that the workforce system directly controls. Without a well-defined process or sufficient staff resources, especially in large dislocations, more dislocated workers are likely to fall through the cracks. Such workers, respondents have frequently suggested, are the ones most in need of help to learn about and understand TAA and to accept the need for services. Production workers, who comprise most of the TAA-eligible population, often fall into this category.

Several states have re-organized their intake processes to facilitate enrollment and reduce the risk that eligible workers are ignored or overwhelmed by the intake requirements. While checklists for staff and participants are commonly used, four states, California, Colorado, Oregon, and Pennsylvania, were nominated for having excellent intake processes. In this section, we review the processes used by California and Pennsylvania, which incorporate their mandatory checklists into a comprehensive intake process.

In **Pennsylvania**, the intake process was developed after the 2002 amendments to the TAA program to address the deadlines to qualify for TRA, popularly known as the “8/16” deadline,<sup>8</sup> though the 2011 amendments now use a 26-week deadline. Each step of the intake process is scripted, although local staff members have discretion to adjust their specific process to meet space requirements and the unique circumstances of each dislocation. The state’s formal information notice to the workforce system on the intake process provides an extensive toolkit for local areas to implement the process, which is available on the web. Intake starts with a Trade Benefit Rights Interview conducted by Rapid Response coordinators who are well trained in TAA program details. If possible, this group introduction is held before the layoff and at the employment site. By the end of the session, the trade-eligible worker fills out the formal application for TAA and makes an appointment at the local One-Stop Career Center for intake.

Intake consists of sequential processes, including WIA and TAA enrollment and preliminary assessment. Workers who are interested in pursuing training also receive a follow-up appointment with appropriate WIA or TAA staff. Those interested in job search are introduced

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<sup>8</sup> To be eligible for TRA, applicants must be enrolled in training by the later of 8 weeks after certification or 16 weeks after separation, unless they are granted a waiver from the training requirement.

to the One-Stop Career Center resources. This intake process is often conducted in coordination with neighboring One-Stop Career Centers that provide extra staffing. Visiting teams from other centers have been used to help to small rural centers (which may only have one TAA staff person) process large volumes of workers.

Accountability for participation by each worker on the certified worker list is maintained. If an individual does not attend the intake session, the state sends the worker a follow-up letter. A participant folder is created for each individual who does attend with a checklist for each of the steps. Staff members are responsible for ensuring that all the steps leading to active participation in job search or training are completed and documented in the folder. The staff maintains an Excel spreadsheet to manage the Enrollment/Assessment/Waiver (EAW) process and peer counseling process on a day-to-day basis. In addition, the data are entered in the One-Stop operating system, which can generate reports for front-line staff, local managers, and the central office.

Exhibit III-4 provides details of a TAA dislocation in which the enhanced intake process was used in conjunction with peer counselors

**Result.** State respondents claimed that at least 95 percent of workers who attend a Benefit Rights Interview session will subsequently attend an EAW event if the session is held pre-layoff and at an employer worksite. The case study showed that the enhanced intake process, together with peer counseling, yielded a 75 percent TAA enrollment rate.<sup>9</sup> Non-participants included retirees, voluntary quits and disabled individuals.

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<sup>9</sup> Over 90 percent of the affected workers registered for ES services and 50 percent registered in WIA.

## **Exhibit III-4**

### **Case Study: Using Enhanced Intake Process and Peer Counselors**

**Context:** A mass layoff of 660 workers occurred in three waves, beginning in March 2009 and continuing into 2010, at Cinram, formerly a family-owned firm that produced optical disks for the music and film industry and was later purchased and re-purchased by two larger firms. The plant, located in northeastern Pennsylvania, was the largest manufacturer in the county and its second largest employer. The firm's workers were not unionized. Occupations of affected workers included: injection/molding, machine operators, packaging, warehouse, engineers, tool and die, printing and graphic artists. Workers in the production occupations generally had no more than a high school degree and had worked at the company for 15 to 18 years.

#### **Problems Encountered**

- Workforce system outreach was complicated by shift schedules (most worked 12 hour shifts with 4 days on and 4 days off).
- Some workers expected to remain employed since the company had previously been close to laying people off but had always managed to get new contracts and avoid layoffs.
- Workers had above average wages for the labor market, but limited skills.

#### **Process**

The workforce system started planning and conducting outreach well in advance of the layoffs. The employer and the community were both very cooperative. The company offered its multi-media room for workforce staff presentations and allowed an on-site transition center that was staffed three days per week and open to workers 24/7. Community partners helped many workers enroll in basic computer classes and provided financial counseling. A labor-management committee assisted in guiding the overall effort, and its members and the neutral chair used their contacts in the community to help with placement. Peer counselors, who were considered trustworthy, conducted the outreach work with regular contacts at the worksite, homes, and elsewhere in the community. The peer counselors knew each individual's circumstances so they could assist workforce staff in tailoring service options. A tracking spreadsheet was used to manage the outreach steps to reduce the potential for workers falling through the cracks and to provide peer counselor accountability.

#### **Results**

- Peer counselors had the trust of the workers, so they were effective in convincing them that they really needed workforce services.
- The intake process provided a bridge to connect people to services and helped manage the workflow.
- Of the 660 affected workers, 500 attended on-site group benefits rights interviews and others got the information individually. This resulted in 495 applications for TAA. Non-applicants included retirees, dead and disabled, and voluntary quits. These overall figures include 170 workers who were laid off before the certification date and who had a much lower participation rate than the group as a whole.

Typically, the EAW practice is analyzed for effectiveness during a de-brief meeting in which the Rapid Response coordinator facilitates a discussion with relevant stakeholders on what went well with the process and what parts of the process need improvement. Although the practice is available to be used statewide, its greatest effect has been in large layoffs in rural areas with limited staff.

**California**, too, designed a structured intake that ensures key outreach and enrollment steps are taken. The process was designed for very large TAA dislocations, but it can also be scaled downward for small dislocations. The process was used in the closing of the Toyota-General Motors joint venture, the New United Motors Manufacturing Incorporated (NUMMI) auto assembly plant in Fremont, California (in Alameda County)—a very large dislocation, which affected 4,900 workers in 2010. The state agency and local workforce area crafted an agreement for establishing an on-site transition center at the plant and the commitment of state and local staff at three One-Stop Career Centers in the area, with a minimum staff-to-participant ratio of one-to-five for intake/orientation sessions at the on-site transition center or the main One-Stop Career Center in Hayward, which together served the largest proportion of eligible workers. The centers typically tried to schedule sessions of 15 workers at a time, thus requiring at least 3 staff members, including a state TAA specialist, be present. The agreement established a specific flow chart for services and a checklist of activities that would reduce attrition throughout intake and subsequent participation (discussed in Chapter IV). At the session, the first step was a general presentation on TAA, WIA, and other One-Stop services, which may have been conducted by any staff member, but a TAA staff member was always present to respond to questions on TAA technical issues. Then, all TAA-eligibles, regardless of current employment status or the type of adjustment strategy they expected to pursue, were encouraged to fill out an application for the program. The TAA specialist assisted workers in filling out the application and making an individual appointment with a WIA or TAA specialist for a complete skills assessment, which was the next step in the process. As a final step, the workers received a checklist, displayed as Exhibit III-5, of all the things that they were expected to do as homework to prepare for the assessment appointment. The completed application was then forwarded to the central office for eligibility determination, including notification to the IRS of eligibility for HCTC.

**Results.** As of June 2011, TAA enrolled about 2,100 of 4,900 eligible workers (43 percent), most of whom entered TAA training. This is significantly above the state's average take-up rate for TAA. In addition, many workers received WIA services. The state reports that at least 4,400 (90 percent) have received either a WIA or TAA service.

**Exhibit III-5  
California Participant Checklist**

**Client's TAA Training Requirement ✓ List**

1. Register in CalJOBS, and input resume. (Print copy of completed CalJOBS resume; bring a copy of the CalJOBS resume to the initial interview.)

<http://www.caljobs.ca.gov>

2. Find at least three job listings in your current occupation. Highlight all information that shows a requirement or skill that you do not meet. You can use CalJOBS, other on-line job search databases, newspaper etc.... You must print or make copies of all job listings.

**Note:** Please be advised that if there is a Labor Market for your current occupation/skills you may not be approved for training. You can follow steps in #4 to research the Labor Market for your current occupation.

3. Complete two assessments - **O\*Net Skill Assessment** and **O\*Net Find Occupation Assessment**. (You must print copies of information on all desired occupations.)

<http://online.onetcenter.org>

4. Look Up Labor Market Information for Training Occupation

(You must print copies of information on all desired occupations.)

<http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/>

- Click on the “**California Occupational Guides.**”
- Go to “**Topic Search**” and then “**View the List.**”
- Click on the **first letter** of the occupation title you are selecting and look for the occupation title you chose.
- Then click on the title and **print** the detailed **Labor Market Information.**

5. Look up School Information for each desired occupation; i.e., Adult Schools, Community Colleges, Regional Occupational Programs (ROP). This web site can be used to locate schools for the occupations of interest.

<http://etpl.edd.ca.gov/wiaetplind.htm>

6. You must visit at least 3 schools. The school visits must be with 3 different schools that provide training for the same occupation. Example: If you choose electrician training, all 3 schools must have information regarding their electrician programs. Three different occupational training programs will not be accepted.

7. Contact your TAA Specialist to make an appointment when all information is completed and to have training information reviewed. **You must have an appointment. No walk-ins will be accepted.** You may also call if you have questions or need assistance in completing these steps.

TAA Specialist:            Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Frequent and Open Service Planning With Partners

Careful planning can be instrumental in assuring enrollment when workers' knowledge, expectations, and eligibility are complicated by recalls, severance benefits (that may interfere with UI or TAA benefit receipt), or options to re-locate. Additionally, unionized workers may exercise seniority to control their layoff dates, which can also affect UI or TAA eligibility and start dates for training programs. To examine how a state handles these problems and conducts outreach, this section explores the Oregon planning process.

Every week, the state of **Oregon's** TAA and Dislocated Worker teams meet to review upcoming layoffs. These strategy meetings include AFL-CIO representatives, local TAA staff and WIA partners for the relevant areas. Unions and community colleges are also invited, as well as affected employers (who typically attend infrequently). The combined teams strategize about how to help affected workers, including what benefits they may be eligible for and how their services will be coordinated.<sup>10</sup> The agenda for the meetings includes how best to present layoff information, coordinate case management between WIA and TAA, and plan for next steps. Exhibit III-6 displays the agenda template for the TAA service-planning meeting.

**Result.** To illustrate the effect of planning, the TAA coordinator described a 2011 closing of a paper mill in Oregon City that affected 175 workers. In that case, the workers were very upset at the overall impact of trade on their industry, leading to ongoing political protests by workers against the impact of trade on the paper industry in general. The planning process specifically organized the employer, union, and local resources to separate worker anger and demonstrations from adjustment efforts. Further, the workers were entitled to severance under their union contract, so schedules for TAA enrollment and entry into training programs were timed to accommodate severance without loss of TAA benefits. Under these difficult conditions, 58 percent of the affected workers in the Oregon City closing enrolled in TAA. Especially notable was that a very high proportion enrolled in training very early, which the state attributes to the planning process. They further noted that early enrollment strongly correlates with good outcomes.

Regular communication through these strategy meetings not only facilitates worker enrollment after specific dislocations, but also promotes regular collaboration between agencies, the labor movement and communities, leading to better and more highly organized worker services.

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<sup>10</sup> In Oregon, this collaboration between two dislocated worker teams is especially important because the programs are in separate state agencies.



## Assistance to Limited English Proficient Workers

Any problem that workers face stemming from a lack of knowledge of a complex program like TAA is more acute for disabled and limited-English proficient workers than others, an issue that TAA shares with other workforce programs. Information from the larger TAA evaluation, however, suggests that the states often do not address the needs such special populations during intake and enrollment, with only a handful providing the TAA eligibility notification letter and applications translated into Spanish. Further, only three states published the required notice in non-English newspapers. While many states noted that field staff had some capabilities in Spanish that were helpful during intake sessions, other languages were still a significant challenge.<sup>11</sup>

Oregon's planning process, described above, specifically recognizes the need to plan for outreach to limited-English proficient workers. The employer is typically asked at Rapid Response or before the service-planning group meets whether the state will need to provide services in other languages. Depending on the employer's response, sufficient numbers of program descriptions and forms are made available in Spanish, Russian, and Vietnamese. Translators are also brought in if the local staff lacks the relevant language capacity.

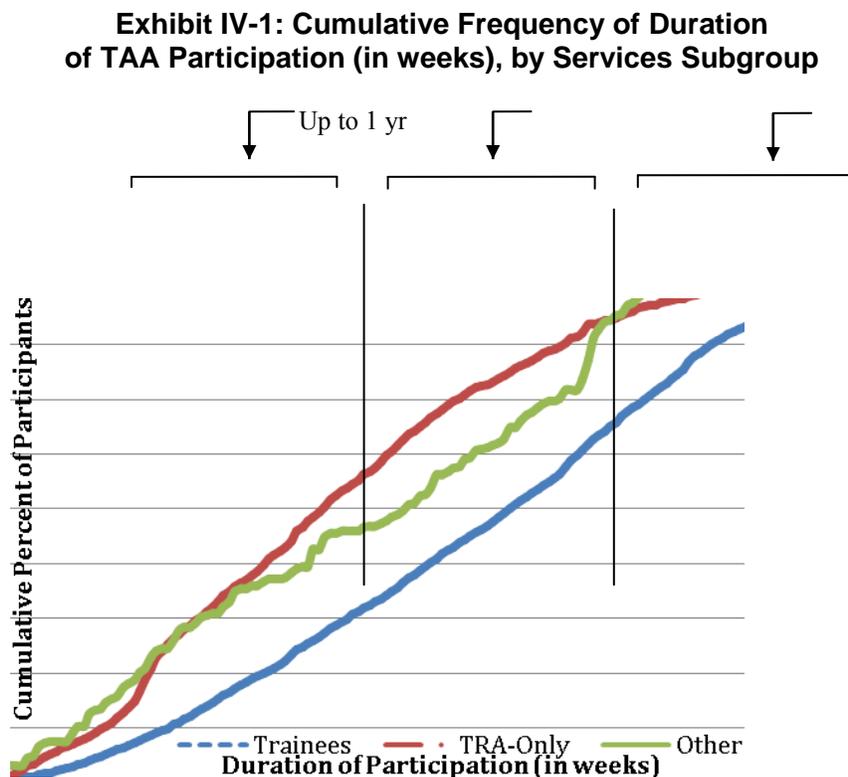
**Result.** No information was available concerning results from these efforts.

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<sup>11</sup> Several states mentioned that they contract for translators in less common languages.

## IV. OUTREACH PRACTICES TO IMPROVE RETENTION

TAA typically provides lengthier services to participants than is common for other workforce programs—TAA can fund participants in training for more than two years, and, for those in training, can provide TRA payments for just as long. Moreover, placement assistance can be provided after training ends, further extending the duration of participation in TAA. Exhibit IV-1 shows the cumulative frequency of participation in the TAA program as it operated under the 2002 amendments, using information drawn from quantitative information gathered in the TAA evaluation.



Source: Administrative data gathered for TAA Impact Study.

Average duration of participation was 89 weeks for trainees, 64 weeks for those who received TRA but not training, and 66 weeks for those receiving other services, such as the wage insurance program or relocation allowances. This contrasts with an average duration for all WIA

dislocated workers (trainees and non-trainees) that ranged from 42 to 21 weeks over a comparable period.

Effective case management is likely an important factor in retention in any workforce program, and it is certainly important for TAA, with its complex requirement and long duration.<sup>12</sup> Strong organizational arrangements are also important, and several outreach practices described here address maintaining contact and assuring participant progress in the program. These are discussed below.

## Comprehensive Tracking Systems

To promote participants' retention until they access all program services they need and complete the services, the workforce system must address two major organizational challenges:

- The TAA program has numerous technical requirements, including deadlines for entry into training with income support and the alternative wage insurance benefit. These deadlines must be managed carefully in the interest of the customers, as participants who miss deadlines are at risk of not being able to access needed services and, worse still, dropping out of the program altogether.
- The TAA program has at times operated under more than one set of requirements, as amendments to the program have been enacted while some participants were enrolled under prior versions of the program. Keeping track of the different rules and assuring compliance has added to the complexities of program administration.

These two areas of complexity add to staff workload and can make it difficult to keep both paper and electronic files up-to-date as well as assuring periodic outreach to participants and their successful completion of services and attainment of suitable employment. Two states have developed tools that address these issues, including such disparate approaches as paper checklists and integrated computerized management information systems (MIS).

**California**, like some other states, has multiple computer and manual systems for managing various aspects of the TAA program. However, to ensure that all steps are completed throughout participation, the state provides a detailed five-page **paper-based checklist** that guides case managers through all their contact with participants, and includes steps to assure that forms are filled out and approvals obtained in a timely fashion. A much shorter checklist, discussed in Chapter III, is given to participants to ensure that they follow their steps in the process

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<sup>12</sup> On this issue, please see SPR's two reports on case management in the TAA program: Melissa Mack, *Assessment, Case Management, and Post-Training Assistance: A Report Prepared As Part of the Evaluation of the Trade Adjustment Assistance Act (2009)*, available at [wdr.doleta.gov/research/FullText\\_Documents/Assessment Case Management and Post-Training Assistance for TAA Participants - Final Report.pdf](http://wdr.doleta.gov/research/FullText_Documents/Assessment Case Management and Post-Training Assistance for TAA Participants - Final Report.pdf), and Christian Geckeler, *Building a Better Experience for the TAA Customer: Practices from the Field for Improving Case Management and Increasing Workforce System Integration* (forthcoming).

**Massachusetts** uses an **integrated computer-based management information system** that tracks dislocated workers at the client level from their initial encounters with the workforce system during Rapid Response to exit. Prior to bringing TAA into its integrated One-Stop operating system, case managers were faxing documents to the central office, and the central office had to expend resources receiving and filing the paper. With an integrated system, front-line staff members have more time to devote to direct customer service and outreach that lead to better retention. Specifically, the integrated system helps staff keep better track of customers' progress in the program by providing a powerful tool to monitor deadlines and requirements through individual queries and customized reports for each case manager. Further, the integrated system coordinates case notes and services rendered across programs, facilitating WIA co-enrollment. It also provides information on when to contact participants regarding their progress in the program.

The state has faced at least two key challenges with implementing this practice. First, surprisingly, it was difficult to convince front-line staff members that extensive paperwork was no longer required for TAA customers. Second, and unsurprisingly, the integrated system was costly to install and to update in response to regulatory and reporting changes.

**Result.** No specific results related to retention were available from either state.

## **Enhanced Contact Information**

A fundamental issue in retention is maintaining contact with participants who may not come in for services frequently. Some participants move, their phones are shut off, or those who are discouraged may not answer the case manager's phone calls or emails. **South Dakota** obtains as many contact telephone numbers for other household members, relatives, friends, or former co-workers as a participant is willing to supply. .

**Result.** This simple step has enabled the state's program to maintain contact with many more participants than was the case when it gathered only one additional contact telephone number



## V. SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS

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There is little question that the workforce investment system devotes considerable resources to TAA outreach. Rapid Response teams often suggest that a TAA petition be filed even if there is only a slim chance of a trade impact, and all state TAA programs send out mandatory letters to those on certified worker lists. In most dislocations, that represents the extent of outreach. For TAA-eligible workers who do not participate in a Rapid Response event or who do not receive or understand the state notification letter, the chance of receiving TAA services or benefits is limited. Further, the need for petition filing and the complicated requirements for service receipt also may act as significant obstacles to program participation. Unfortunately, limited outreach and the complex nature of the TAA program are likely keeping many potentially eligible workers from participating. The survey conducted in the larger TAA evaluation with eligible workers clearly points in that direction.

To better understand the context for enhancing TAA outreach, it is important to take note of major systemic constraints. One such constraint has been the limited resources that TAA can devote to outreach, which must compete for limited administrative dollars with other essential administrative activities. In the face of these other priorities, the overall record suggests that outreach activities lag.

Whether states should spend more administrative resources on TAA outreach is, of course, a matter of policy judgment and balancing competing priorities. The preceding chapters examined practices in states that have already decided to increase their outreach efforts. The balance of this chapter suggests some ways to understand those practices by extracting common themes and challenges cutting across these outreach activities regardless of the objectives or problems they are designed to address.

### **Common Themes in Promising Outreach Practices**

Three general themes or attributes found in the outreach practices explored in this report appear to distinguish them from more routine activities: rigor in application of the practice, accountability for results, and the consistent use of partnerships. Each of these three themes is discussed in turn here.

**Rigor.** Most of the practices discussed in this paper are not uniquely designed for TAA, but, rather, are used with some regularity in the broader workforce investment system to serve dislocated workers and others. For example, peer counseling, partner meetings, and brochures have been widely used for the last thirty years in all types of dislocations. However, a number of practices described in this report appear to have been implemented with more rigor and attention to detail than for other programs or in more routine TAA outreach endeavors. For example, in some states intake practices were sufficiently detailed and prescriptive to ensure that the key steps requiring various forms of outreach were carried out.

**Accountability.** Accountability requirements in TAA required greater detail than in other workforce programs since TAA administrators must document compliance with notification requirements and the services that participants have been offered and received. Enhanced outreach activities go further by embedding accountability features in their strategies or procedures. For example, the intake and management checklists are used to assure that required procedures, including those relating to contacting workers or employers are followed and that results are obtained. Checklists, paper records, and computer-based data systems were used in California and Massachusetts identify responsible staff and provide the capacity to generate reports in order to maintain accountability in the states' retention efforts.

**Partnerships.** The final common thread in strong outreach efforts is the use of partnerships and collaboration. Partnerships recognize the limitations of administrative resources and the interests of others with common or related goals related to outreach in TAA. Key examples of partnerships discussed here include: state level TAA programs in Pennsylvania and California working with local WIA programs to support TAA intake efforts that would otherwise have overtaxed existing resources, Washington's collaboration with economic development agencies, community colleges, and other agencies to broaden awareness of TAA, and collaboration with organized labor for outreach to dislocated workers generally and to those eligible for TAA.

## Challenges in Expanding and Improving Outreach

There are several substantial challenges—cutting across the categories of outreach and the types of underlying problems—that need resolution before the potentially promising endeavors described in this report can confidently be considered effective practices. These challenges include:

- **Lack of problem analysis.** The states highlighted in this report were not particularly analytic in developing their practices. Most simply applied familiar tools to a general problem (such as petitions not being filed or eligible workers not enrolling). There was little evidence that states explored in detail the specific causes for low petition-filing or enrollment rates, or that they conducted systematic interviews, surveys, or focus groups with eligible workers or front-line staff to parse out the specific problems that needed to

be addressed. For example, while peer counseling appears to be useful in addressing either knowledge or expectation problems, it remains important to more clearly identify the specific needs of workers so that the counselor training and practice can directly address them.<sup>13</sup>

- **Limited data and evaluation.** There was little evaluation of the efficacy of practices, which remain more potentially promising than proven. Thus, for most of the practices in this guide, data on results are spotty, anecdotal, or completely absent. While cost and other logistical factors make formal evaluation inappropriate for what are largely day-to-day management techniques, states would be well served to collect more data and implement managerial processes that allow for review of these practices to determine whether they are effective in increasing petition filing, enrollment, or retention.
- **Restrictions on sharing data.** Two states, California and Washington, sought to use third parties—the Local Workforce Investment Areas and the state labor federation respectively—to conduct follow-up outreach using certified worker lists to telephone or otherwise contact workers who had not responded to the initial state-issued notice. However, in both cases, restrictions on sharing data with personally identifiable information precluded those efforts. Given more demanding Federal requirements and broad public concern about security breaches, it is likely that data-sharing restrictions will increase in the future and they are likely to hinder or complicate outreach efforts, even in states with currently less restrictive rules.

## Potentially Promising Outreach Practices

Of the practices presented in this report, a few stand out as relatively more promising. To varying degrees they demonstrate the attributes discussed above. Further, some of these practices appear to come at little cost, so they do not require difficult judgments about how to balance program priorities. In such cases, even if the practice has limited results, it still may be cost effective. These relatively more promising practices include:

- An **enhanced intake process** that mobilizes several branches of the state workforce agency and the local One-Stop Career Center system may solve several problems related to take-up. Pennsylvania's intake comes closest to having the attributes of rigor, accountability, and partnership as related to outreach. State and local partners reviewed procedures and the state has modified them periodically, and some partners were directly involved in contacting workers. Further, the state collected data on the results, in order to have useful information for managing the practice and steering it towards greater effectiveness.

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<sup>13</sup> In this regard, it must be noted that the specific problems identified in this report (knowledge gaps, unrealistic worker expectations, employer reluctance, or lack of workforce system capacity), that provide the conceptual framework in this report were imputed by the author and did not necessarily emerge from development processes in the states.

- **Collaboration with labor organizations** in providing outreach and services to dislocated workers, including those eligible for TAA, has an extensive history in many states. Labor involvement in TAA is probably best exemplified in the State of **Washington**, which used its state labor federation to conduct a wide variety of activities to increase petitioning and take-up.
- **Mining administrative data** to identify dislocations and eligible workers in order to provide additional outreach. **New York** used UI and ES data to identify dislocations that may have escaped Rapid Response. **Oregon's** development of notification lists and letters stood out for its ease of use. Giving TAA the capability to query UI databases may improve organizational coordination while holding down costs.
- **Peer counseling** has a long history in dislocated worker services, including in services for those eligible for TAA. Nearly all the states cited in this report used this technique and thought it had been very successful. While the data on effectiveness are sparse, the logic of this approach to promoting TAA take-up is very compelling.
- **Social networking** through technology is still in its infancy. Nevertheless, several strategies appear to have strong potential to address both knowledge gaps and unrealistic worker expectations, so thoughtful experimentation should be encouraged. If its potential is fulfilled, social networking is likely to be highly useful and cost effective.
- **Adding TAA information during other outreach to employers.** Michigan has been able to take advantage of employer interest in UI to provide information on TAA during seminars on UI. While it is impractical to evaluate such outreach for direct effects related to TAA petitions and enrollment, the cost is so slight that adopting such a practice is reasonable because of the likelihood of a net benefit.

## APPENDIX: RESEARCH PROTOCOL

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- What was the specific problem and circumstances that gave rise to the practice?

### Case Illustrating the Problem Before the Strategy Was Implemented

Company

Industry

Location (city)

Layoff or closure

# of workers laid off

Typical occupations

Overview of worker characteristics

Layoff all at once or in waves

Relevant contextual factors in the economy/labor market

Approximate date of layoff (1<sup>st</sup> date if in waves)

Problem(s) faced in this case

Other circumstances

Result (failure to file petition/no certification or cert. delayed)

- Describe the development process, including:
  - Collaboration with other parties within and outside the workforce system.
  - Obstacles to be overcome.
- Describe the application of the practice to the variety of settings in which it is used (for example, different types of layoffs, industries, occupational groups, employer types, etc.). Be specific.

## Case Illustrating the New Strategy

Company
Industry
Location (city)
Layoff or closure
# of workers laid off
Typical occupations
Overview of worker characteristics
Layoff all at once or in waves
Relevant contextual factors in the economy/labor market
Approximate date of layoff (1 <sup>st</sup> date if in waves)
Problem(s) faced in this case
Other circumstances
Result (failure to file petition/no certification or cert. delayed)

- What economic and other contextual factors affected the outreach practice in the case example?
- What workforce system organization design affected the outreach practice in the case example?
- How has the practice been modified since initial implementation?
- What are the obstacles to further implementation of the practice?
- How is the practice analyzed or measured for effectiveness?
- What have been the results of implementing the practice on overall TAA operations beyond the specific problem?
- What considerations would you recommend to other sites replicating the practice?