

Ozark Region Report of Activities

Prepared 02/2010





A note from the Director

Over the past two years, the Ozark Region, as well as our Nation, has faced a number of issues, from the drastic shift in the economy and loss of jobs to changes in leadership and ways of conducting business. We have also had many triumphs and witnessed our Region rise to the challenges.

We have formed new partnerships and strengthened others. We have sought and received new resources to aid our Region in training workers to succeed in the 21st Century. Our Workforce Investment Board has grown and is becoming more and more active.

The staff members at the Springfield and Branson Career Centers are to be commended for their efforts to ensure each customer receives the best service even when there has been questions regarding how the economy will impact them.

We received more funding in the past year due to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds. We used these funds to provide additional training to those who needed it the most, including the Region's unemployed and at-risk youth. In addition, we were able to secure the Mobile Career Center, which has been a dream of ours for a number of years. To witness the excitement that this mobile unit has already produced is overwhelming.

The following report takes the reader through some of the challenges faced over the past few years and the successes of our Region. Though not inclusive of every activity, the report highlights many of our accomplishments.

We look forward to a bright future—one filled with continuing partnerships and expanded efforts to serve the Ozark Region!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bill Roney". The signature is fluid and cursive.

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Introduction

The following report has been prepared for the Ozark Region Workforce Investment Board, the Council of Local Elected Officials, and community stakeholders. We have attempted to highlight our accomplishments, challenges, and anticipations for the future.

In addition to the mid-year information for the program year 09-10, this report also reflects information for the entire 2009 calendar year, as well as comparison data from prior years. Data was obtained through local, state, and federal sources.

Ozark Region

The Ozark Region is comprised of seven counties: Christian, Dallas, Greene, Polk, Stone, Taney, and Webster. According to MERIC, the Ozark Region's population exceeded 504,000, a slight increase over the previous year. This is up over 60,000 since the 2000 Census.

Area	Population 2008
Christian County	75,479
Dallas County	16,844
Greene County	266,944
Polk County	30,404
Stone County	31,551
Taney County	47,023
Webster County	36,473
Ozark Region Summary	504,718

Figure 1: According to MERIC

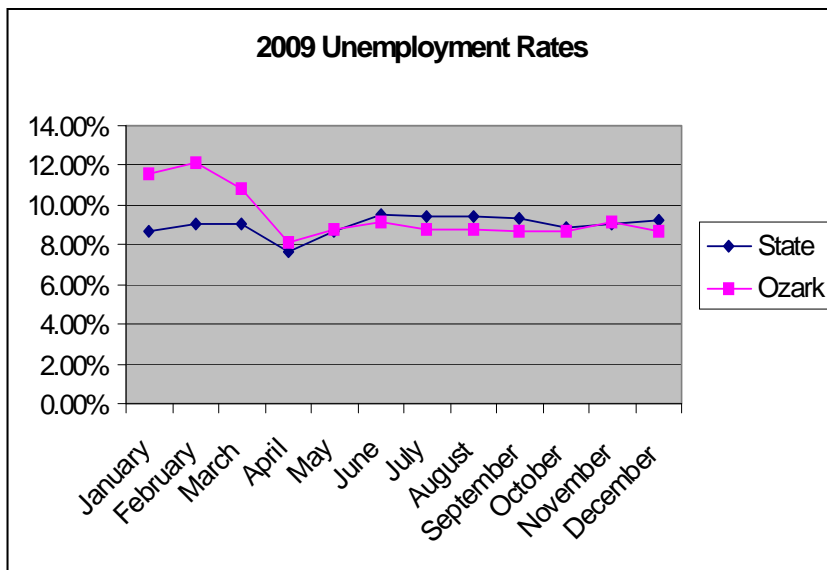
Unemployment in the Region

From July 2008 until September 29, 2009, our Rapid Response staff recorded 4,261 layoffs, either by closure of a facility or a reduction. There were thirteen companies who laid off over 100 employees, five of these impacted over 200 employees. Petit Jean's closure in Dallas County resulted in the loss of 465 jobs. In a county that has a relatively low population, this was a major blow. In Polk County, Bolivar alone had 356 layoffs, due to the losses at Tracker Marine.

Comparing the data between the Ozark Region and the State seems to indicate that we were slightly higher than the State's rate of unemployment overall. However, the extremely high numbers for January and February 2009 in Stone and Taney County can be attributed to seasonal employment.

Ozark Region Unemployment Rates 2009

	Christian	Dallas	Greene	Polk	Stone	Taney	Webster	Average
January	7.80%	12.60%	7.00%	9.20%	18.00%	18.00%	8.60%	11.60%
February	8.10%	13.10%	7.50%	9.40%	18.80%	18.80%	9.30%	12.14%
March	8.10%	12.80%	8.00%	9.50%	13.70%	13.70%	9.70%	10.79%
April	6.70%	9.30%	6.70%	7.80%	9.30%	9.30%	8.00%	8.16%
May	7.50%	9.60%	7.70%	9.40%	9.10%	9.10%	8.90%	8.76%
June	8.10%	10.60%	8.50%	10.60%	8.40%	8.40%	9.70%	9.19%
July	8.10%	9.70%	8.20%	10.00%	8.10%	8.10%	9.30%	8.79%
August	8.10%	9.20%	8.40%	10.10%	8.30%	8.30%	8.80%	8.74%
September	8.00%	9.40%	8.20%	8.70%	8.90%	8.90%	8.90%	8.71%
October	7.80%	9.70%	7.80%	8.60%	9.20%	9.20%	8.70%	8.71%
November	7.90%	10.50%	8.00%	8.50%	10.10%	10.10%	8.90%	9.14%
December	8.00%	11.50%	7.90%	8.80%	11.30%	10.80%	9.20%	8.70%



Missouri 2009	
January	8.70%
February	9.10%
March	9.10%
April	7.70%
May	8.70%
June	9.50%
July	9.40%
August	9.40%
September	9.30%
October	8.90%
November	9.10%
December	9.20%

The good news is that the number of job orders placed in the system has been increasing. (**Note:** as of January 19, 2010, there were 630 job orders in the MissouriCareerSource system.)

Workforce Investment Board

Membership

As of the preparation of this report, the Ozark Region Workforce Investment Board has 32 members and two candidates who will be presented to the WIB for approval at the March 2010 meeting. Eighteen of the current are business representatives and 14 are public representatives. The candidates will be business representatives. This fulfills the requirement of having a minimum of 51% business representatives. (*Please see the attached membership list.*)

A concerted effort has been made over the past few years to increase attendance at the meetings and to solicit active members. As a result, attendance has steadily grown, especially among the business members. In 2007, we were barely having enough business members to meet the 51% requirement. Since the first meeting in 2008, there has been a minimum of 56% business representation at the meetings. The actual attendance has gone up 52% since August 2007.

There has also been an effort to ensure representation from various industries, especially the industries considered "high-growth". We have representatives from health care, transportation, construction, retail and hospitality, utilities, manufacturing, technology, private and public universities and colleges, as well as our required public representatives.

Members have become more active in recruiting new members. A sub-committee of the WIB was formed to recruit new members. This small committee has, on their own, been responsible for two new members since their establishment September 2009. Other WIB members are also getting the word out in their county. Each of our counties has the required business member. Though an emphasis has been placed on obtaining members that represent the various industries in our area, an effort continues to have more than one active member in each county.

Committees

Executive Committee

The WIB Executive Committee meets prior to WIB meetings to set the agenda. In addition, it is the responsibility of the Executive Committee to develop and recommend policies and procedures for the WIB and its committees. The Executive Committee reviews any studies, reports, policy recommendations or other documents submitted by regular or special committees they are presented to the full WIB. Under the leadership of Bill Skains, WIB Chair, this Committee has continued these efforts throughout the year.

Finance Committee

The WIB Finance Committee has primary responsibility for reviewing WIA-funded and appropriate non-WIA funded employment and training plans, budgets and modifications; reviewing service

provider budgets; reviewing budgets associated with other employment and training programs operating within the service delivery area as may be appropriate; and making formal recommendations to the WIB. This committee changed leadership with the resignation of Jim Short who had retired from his position at the Bank of Urbana. Bill Smillie was selected as the new Chair.



Saying goodbye to Jim Short

Marketing Committee

The Marketing Committee has primary responsibility for development and oversight of a comprehensive public relations and marketing plan for the Workforce Investment Board and the Missouri Career Center services. The Committee developed and recommended a logo for the WIB and revised the WIB brochure. The Committee is currently working with the Planning and Oversight Committee to develop an employer survey to aid in updating the Strategic Plan. The Marketing Committee will continue their focus to highlight the WIB in outreach efforts to businesses in 2010.

Planning and Oversight Committee

The Planning and Oversight Committee has the primary responsibility for the development of the Ozark Region WIA Plan of Services and assisting with the establishment and negotiations of performance standards and measures for WIA-funded and appropriate non-WIA funded youth, adult, and dislocated worker programs operated within the services delivery area. The Committee may also review and evaluate project/program performance and outcomes and recommend performance-related changes and/or modifications as necessary. As this Committee has responsibility for any revision to the WIB Strategic Plan, the Committee is currently working with the WIB Marketing Committee to develop a survey that will be distributed to employers to determine needs resulting in changes to the Strategic Plan.

The Committee reviews issues related to economic development and workforce issues of the region. The need for allied health workers was reviewed by the Committee; however, responses to a survey to develop a consortium to study the issue was not determined to be sufficient to form the consortium. They will continue, though, to focus on this important area.

Youth Council

The Youth Council committee has primary responsibility for the development and oversight of WIA-funded youth activities operating within the Ozark Region. The Council achieved its required membership with the inclusion of a member from law enforcement and the required parent member. The Council accepted the recommendation of the sub-committee regarding the Youth provider for 2010-2011. Glenn Cargile was elected to continue the position of chair and Todd Duncan, Rare Breed, was selected as the vice-chair upon the resignation of Steve Johnson. The Council has indicated that they will take a more active approach in ensuring that the Youth provider meets the obligations of the contract.

Activities

Grants & Initiatives

NEG

The heavy flooding during the spring of 2008 prompted the federal government to offer a National Emergency Grant (NEG) for areas severely impacted. This NEG was to be used to provide temporary work for individuals whose livelihood was affected by the flooding. The Ozark Region contacted each county with the Region to determine needs. Webster County responded that the county was in need of assistance for clean-up efforts.



The Ozark Region received a NEG in the amount of \$185,000 and spent 166,553.27 or 90% of the funds. The funds were used to employ and provide supportive services to 8 individuals, equipment, and training. This project was finalized in January 09.



SWI

In March 2008, the Ozark Region submitted an application for the Skilled Workforce Initiative (SWI) Talent Acquisition and Development Category to be used for Incumbent Worker training for CoxHealth employees. Upon this award, the program allowed employees in varying areas of responsibility to be provided training that would lead to higher levels. Among these, 25 employees completed the RN program, six received a BSN, one received a MSN, and several received certifications.

Due to the success of this program, the Ozark Region and CoxHealth Foundation were presented the E3 Award during the Governor's Economic Development Conference in September 2009. We have also continued the partnership with Cox by applying for another grant that will allow individuals with a Bachelors degree to transfer into the nursing program at Cox College to receive a Bachelor's in Nursing.

CDBG Grant

In 2008, the Ozark Region was approved for a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for a pilot program to place an interactive job kiosk at the Mid-town Carnegie Branch Library in Springfield. A CDBG could only be used in a specific geographical area as designated by the City of Springfield. The company, that provided the kiosk for the library, also provided one for the Springfield Career Center at no additional cost. Due to the timing of the grant, the project overlapped into 2009



At the cost of the kiosk and overall use of the kiosk did not make it feasible for the project to be continued even though it proved to be beneficial in the Springfield Center during high traffic times. Prior to the Center receiving additional computers, this unit allowed individuals to conduct job search when there were no computers available.

The Ozark Region applied, and was approved for, a CDBG to provide assistance in local high schools. Temporary personnel have been assigned to work with schools within the CDBG area to provide information and assistance regarding Career Center services. This is providing recognition of the Ozark Region, not only for students, but also for staff in the school system.

Green Technology

The Ozark Region worked with the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC) to apply for a grant to conduct regional studies on how Green technology is being used by the Region's businesses. The Region has just been awarded \$40,000 as our share of that grant. We will partner with the Ozarks Regional Economic Partnership, a voluntary organization comprised of cities, counties, and chambers of commerce representing local community and business leaders from the Region to implement the grant. The results should give a better understanding of what local businesses will need in the future as we together grow the Green economy.

Youth Provider

In September 2009, the Ozark Region developed a Request for Proposal (RFP) to determine the youth provider for 2010-2011. A subcommittee of the Youth Council was formed with two members of the Youth Council, two members of the WIB, and the WIB Director. This committee assisted in the preparation of the RFP, reviewed the two proposals, and made a recommendation to the Youth Council that the current Youth services contractor, Alternative Opportunities, Inc./ Workforce Partnerships (AO), be awarded the contract for 2010-2011. This contract will have options for renewal for up to five years. The Youth Council agreed to the recommendation and forwarded it onto the WIB and CLEO, who subsequently approved the Youth Council's recommendation. The proposal by AO contained an increase in services provided and the recommended inclusion of partners for other services.

Strengthening Partnerships

In addition to building stronger partnerships through incumbent worker training, the Summer Youth program, and On-the-Job (OJT) opportunities, we have attempted to strengthen our partnership with Ozarks Technical Community College. In December of 2008, we solicited OTC to have a permanent placement at the Career Center as one of these Partners. Though there were some complaints to the State regarding allowing OTC space in the Center from other local proprietary educational entities we believed it would be a good opportunity for customers. OTC had previously maintained space at the Springfield Center from September 2001 until September 2003; however had discontinued the practice until this past year.



MISSOURI Career Center

Where talent and opportunities meet

Ozark Region

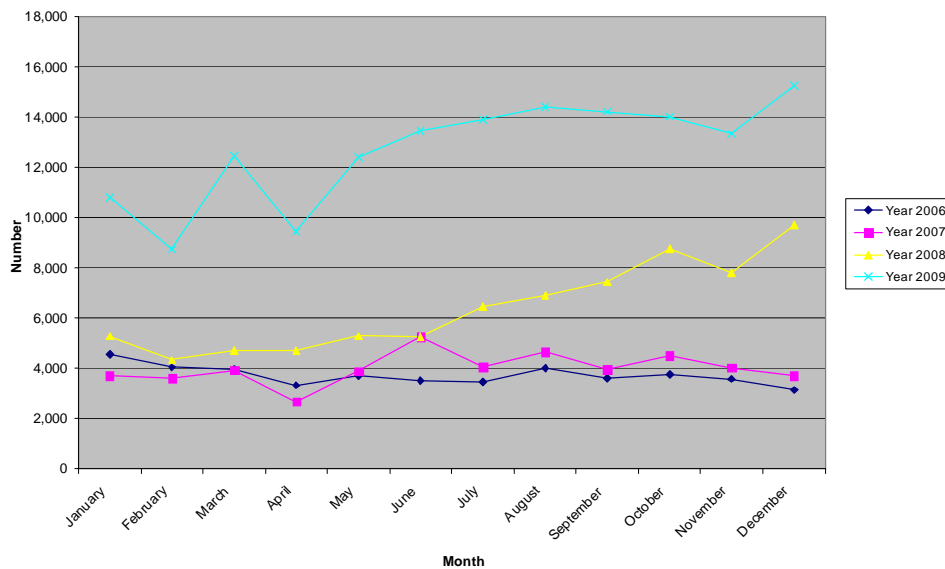
Missouri Career Centers (Springfield and Branson)

The WIB has responsibility for the oversight of the Ozark Region Career Centers. The following sections pertain to the Springfield and Branson Career Centers.

Record Numbers

The Springfield Center was the busiest single Career Center in the State with 152,408 visits from January 2009 until December 31, 2009; double the number from the previous year.

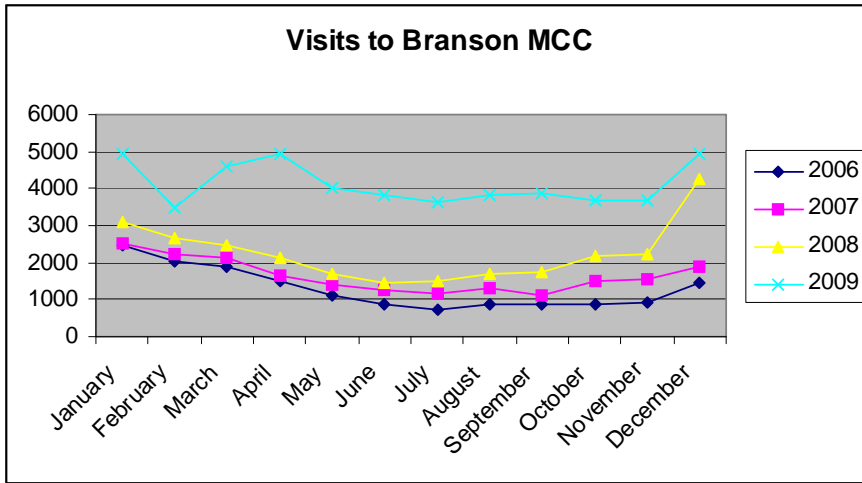
Visits to Springfield MCC



To address the number of individuals who were conducting on-site job search and four-week reporting (unemployment insurance,) we added ten additional computers to our resource room.

The Branson Center

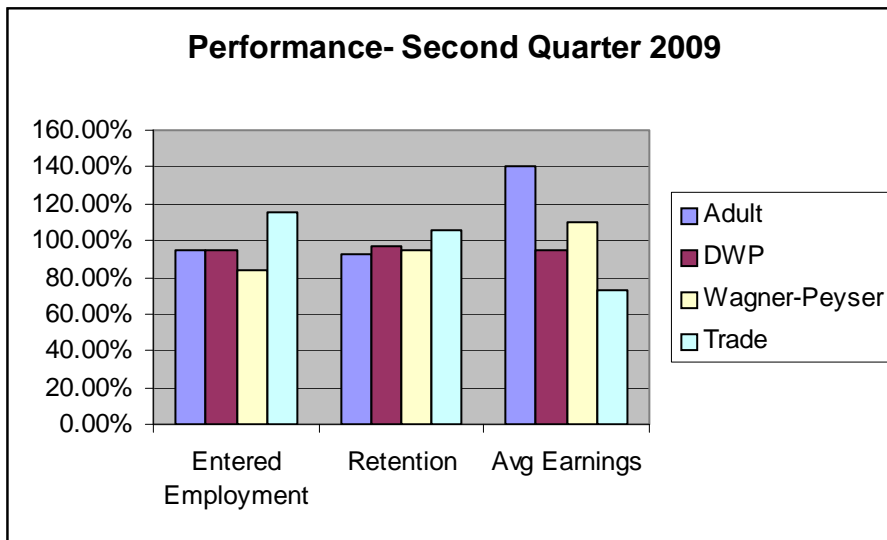
The Branson Center received 27,176 visits in 2008. The number of visits in 2009 topped out at 49,439, an 82% increase.



Performance

For the past two program years (07 & 08), the Ozark Region has received incentive awards from the State for exceeding all performance measures. We are one of three that received the award out of the 14 Regions this past year.

Even with the downturn in the economy, we are still making performance.



As of 01/11/2010

It is believed that the high average earnings can be attributed to the number of well-qualified individuals who were out of work and who had obtained a position at a higher wage.

Our Youth program has made great strides this past year, especially in the attainment of degrees.

*WIA Youth Performance	
Youth Attain Degree	104.04%
Youth Placement	113.64%
Literacy Numeracy	190.48%

**Program year runs from April to March*

Budget

The Ozark Region received an additional \$4.4 million over the previous year’s budget. Much of this was made available through American Recovery Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds. The vast majority of these monies went for participant Training and no additional staff were hired to handle two times the previous year’s number of clients served. In addition, the previously mentioned National Emergency Grant (NEG) is being used for individuals who lost their jobs during a specific time and through specific companies. The majority of these funds were also used for training and only one temporary staff person was hired to work specifically with these customers. These funds have already been 100% obligated. Obligated funds are funds that have been set aside to provide for the next semester of tuition so that participants can count on us to assist them to training completion. As part of that, to date over \$1.2 million dollars have been expended to OTC for occupational skill training, not including future obligations.

We accomplished this with little overhead and with the majority of funds ensuring that citizens are given the opportunity to prepare themselves for the jobs of the future. Only 5%, of the allowed 10% administrative costs, was set aside for Administrative operations of the new funding. We pride ourselves in keeping our administrative costs to a minimum and are among the lowest in the State. Our program history and operation of employee training programs has contributed to our overall efficiency of operation.

Mobile Career Center

At the Workforce Investment Board’s direction, we set about to procure a Mobile Career Center to assist us to reach out to the unemployed in our outlying counties. All of our counties were hit hard this past year with closures and the unemployment rate rose. In some counties such as Polk and Dallas, unemployment skyrocketed. Many of the individuals impacted must travel over 50 miles to a Career Center to conduct their four-week reporting. The new mobile career center will allow us to go deep into our counties and provide the services desperately needed.



Kick-off ceremonies are being held in each of the counties in the Ozark Region.



To the left, WIB member and Buffalo Chamber President, Denise Reed, expresses her excitement at the Dallas County ceremony.

Summer Youth

Our Summer Youth Program was a tremendous success. During the summer months, a total of 285 youth were placed in some type of work experience. We received only positive feedback from the 127 businesses involved.



**Summer Youth Participant
Richard Champos**

The program was allowed to extend past the September 30 deadline, which allowed us to place an additional 265 college-age youth at local educational institutions for work experience. In absence of our Summer Youth Program, these work opportunities for students would not have been available to institutions as their Work Study programs were cut due to loss of funding. Altogether, we were able to place over 550 students in a work experience.



**Pre and Post Testing helped
determine work experience**



During a dinner with the Governor, the Ozark Region was among those recognized for the Summer Youth Program. Summer Youth Participant, Synethia Collins, and Barry Hart, Executive Vice President and CEO, Associate Missouri Electric Coop (AMEC) attended the ceremony with Director Bill Dowling.

Adult & Dislocated Worker Program

Those who qualify for the WIA Adult or Dislocated Worker programs are provided an opportunity to receive training. Currently, we have 2,708 customers who have gone through an initial assessment. A total of 785 customers have been placed in occupational/vocational education training since 2007; and currently, there are 441 individuals in occupational/ vocational education training. With the shortage of available positions in our Region, we have placed an even greater emphasis on training. Many of the individuals who lost their jobs due to plant closures had limited education and were often Basic skills deficient. As such, we expanded access to our own on-site GED classes as well as provided direct funding to OTC to offer a GED class in Louisburg, MO.

The training funds for our Adult and Dislocated Worker program (including ARRA funds) were completely obligated due to the economic situation by the beginning of August; after which we requested an additional \$400,000 in Statewide Dislocated Worker funds to be used for training. We received the authorization to allocate these DWP funds October 23, 2009; however, no additional funds were available for WIA Adult. Much of these supplemental funds have already been spent or obligated for the next semester. Without the additional funds, we would not have been able to serve the many individuals impacted by the economy.

Through a partnership with Cox College of Nursing, a Robert Wood Johnson grant was received. This award allowed several participants to pursue a Bachelor in Nursing degree. Recipients are picture below at an awards ceremony.



Youth Program

Alternative Opportunities, Inc./Workforce Partnerships (AO) is the provider of WIA youth services. Changes in local supervision have improved the lines of communication over the past year and we are pleased with their continued efforts to secure qualified employees who can assist youth. They have increased training of staff to ensure they are provided the knowledge necessary to serve customers while meeting program requirements.



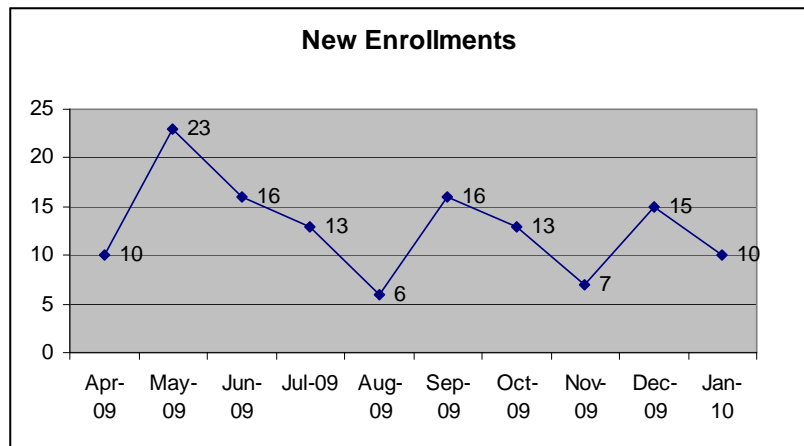
Serving Youth



AO has made efforts to increase services to youth in outlying counties by having designated staff members who frequent these counties. In addition, they have stepped up their efforts to encourage higher education and training.

As of January 2010, there are 220 active youth in the program. Of these, 52 are Older Youth (OY) and 168 Younger Youth (YY); 99 are out of school and 121 are currently in school. The following is a breakdown by county and a chart reflecting the number of new enrollments per month.

Current Enrollments	
Christian County	12
Dallas County	6
Greene County	155
Polk County	15
Stone County	10
Taney County	15
Webster County	7



As of January 2010

As their contract is set to expire in April 2010, a Request for Proposal (RFP) process was followed to procure youth services once the contract expired. AO responded with expanded services geared to follow a consortium approach, which will allow them to use local agencies to provide services, such as mentoring, to our youth customers.



Services to Businesses

We continue to build relationships with area businesses, whether it is providing assistance with finding qualified applicants, accepting applications and screening for businesses, linking businesses with the information they need, or providing testing services.

On-the Job Training (OJT)

On the Job Training (OJT) is a method of providing individualized occupational skills training for Dislocated Workers and Low Income Adults. The goal of the OJT program is to place participants in occupations that will enhance their prospects for long-term employment and will ultimately permit them to become self-sufficient. OJT involves the acquisition of specific skills and employment competencies, through exposure in an actual work setting, to the processes, work tasks, tools and methods of a specific job or group of jobs. It is a “hire-first” program in which the employer, either public or private, enters into an agreement with the Career Center to hire, train, and retain the individual upon successful completion of the training program. Through this program, businesses may be reimbursed up to 50% of the new employee’s wages while they are in training.

During 2009, efforts have increased to establish On-the-Job (OJT) opportunities in the Ozark Region. Through a partnership with Heritage Acres in Pleasant Hope, Missouri, and Ozarks Technical Community College (OTC), nine OJT opportunities were provided to dislocated workers. OTC was set up to provide training on health and safety for employees of Heritage Acres. Other possible sites for OJT opportunities continue to be reviewed. The Business Services Representatives have taken on the task of developing these opportunities with area businesses.

Assessment Center

Our Assessment Center conducted 2,283 educational and skills assessments, as well as industry and job-specific assessments during 2009. The use of the Assessment Center continues to grow.



Staff

Currently, there are 89 staff members housed at the Springfield Center and 12 staff housed at the Branson Center. This number includes five temporary staff in the Next Generation Summer Youth program, one temporary NEG staff, two AmeriCorps staff, and two Re-employment Services (RES) staff members. RES staff members were brought on board by the State to assist individuals on unemployment.

Staff from both Centers participated in a full day of training during the fall of 2009. In order to have less disruption on services, the training was separated into two days with some staff going one day and the remainder the next day. A national speaker was brought in to speak on the growing number of individuals who are being released from prison and the difficulties in finding employment for these individuals. Team building was provided through the Skinny Improv. The training was made possible through the incentive funds received for performance.

Looking to the Future

Next Generation Career Centers

Career Centers must begin to move more customers from the front desk, the resource area, and Reemployment Services into a vibrant skills development service track. Moving to a new skills and jobs organizational culture is imperative: work first does not work very well when there are not many jobs available.

As such, all of Missouri's Career Centers throughout the State are reinventing their customer flow to respond to these current and emerging expectations by integrating service delivery, giving staff the skills they need to promote skill development services, and increasing training options that respond to regional economies and customer needs.

Our Region is currently mapping "the-front-desk-to-training-to job getting-to entry" process, eliminating low value-added bureaucratic steps, reducing cycle time, and developing an inclusive, not exclusive, strategy to help all customers get the skills they need to compete for the jobs they want.

Conclusion

This report has been prepared to showcase efforts that are being made in the Ozark Region for Workforce Development. Services go way beyond programs and funding. We are a resource to the Ozark Region, whether it be assisting a job seeker or a business or looking out for the economic future of the Region.

For more information regarding the Ozark Region Workforce Investment Board or the Missouri Career Center, contact the Springfield Missouri Career Center at 417-887-4343.
