

Wondering What's Happening with the Recovery Act this Week?

WOW's Weekly Scan of Federal ARRA Happenings for the Week Ending March 5



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As more and more announcements are made of grant opportunities, new and changing rules and regulations, policy and program objectives, WOW will be watching. On a weekly basis, we will provide "Federal ARRA Happenings." Helping your organization understand and advocate based on what federal rules will allow and are encouraging the states to do under the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act can make a difference for all of us. If you have any questions about what you read here, please call us at (202) 464-1596 –we are here to assist you.

From the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL)

- **Online tools for grant applicants**

DOL launched online resources for grant applicants including examples to guide people through the process of applying and explanation of factors that they see as core to a successful application with the goal of helping applicants who are new to applying for federal funds better understand the requirements of the grant process.

There is also an annotated sample solicitation for grant applications, advice on how to respond to particular sections; hints on areas of solicitations that can be particularly challenging; suggestions for avoiding common pitfalls; and links to direct applicants to helpful Web sites and additional outside resources.

For more information go to

http://www.workforce3one.org/page/grants_toolkit.

To read the press statement go

to: <http://www.dol.gov/opa/media/press/eta/eta20100277.htm>

- **UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE PROGRAM LETTER NO. 04-10, Change 1**

This directive was published to inform states of the extension of Emergency Unemployment Compensation, 2008 (EUC08) and the Federal Additional Compensation (FAC) programs, and the extension of the temporary provisions for the Federal-State Extended Benefits (EB) program.

Although the extension of the EUC08 and FAC programs and the extension of the temporary provisions relating to EB were not signed into law until March 2, 2010, they are effective for weeks of unemployment beginning on and after February 28, 2010. As a result, there is no gap between the expiration of the provisions as described in UIPL 04-10 and the extension of such provision by the Temporary Extension Act of 2010 as described in this UIPL. Changes impacting individual states will be published on the U.S. Department of Labor (Department) website at: http://oui.doleta.gov/unemploy/claims_arch.asp,

For more information read the full directive at: <http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/UIPL/UIPL04-10c1acc.pdf>

DOL Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP)

OFCCP is hosting webinars to provide information on the equal employment opportunity (EEO) and affirmative action (AA) provisions of Federal contracts involving American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) funds.

Construction federal contractors are required to take specific affirmative action steps – 16 to be exact. In this webinar, Federal and federally-assisted construction contractors and subcontractors will learn about these 16 steps and what to expect during a construction compliance evaluation.

Register for a session now by clicking a date below:

[Tue, Mar 16, 2010 2:00 PM - 3:30 PM EDT](#)

[Tue, Mar 30, 2010 2:00 PM - 3:30 PM EDT](#)

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY (DOE)

Recovery Act: Factors Affecting the Department of Energy's Program Implementation (GAO-10-497T, March 4)

This GAO testimony discusses the extent to which DOE has obligated and spent its Recovery Act funds, and the factors that have affected DOE's ability to select and start Recovery Act projects. In addition, GAO includes information on ongoing work related to DOE Recovery Act programs. The report is available at: <http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-10-497T>. To read only the highlights, go to <http://www.gao.gov/highlights/d10497thigh.pdf>.

COBRA

The *Temporary Extension Act of 2010* extended Recovery Act provisions provides for premium reductions for health benefits under the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985, commonly called COBRA.

- Eligible individuals pay only 35 percent of their COBRA premiums and the remaining 65 percent is reimbursed to the coverage provider through a tax credit.
- To qualify, individuals must experience a COBRA qualifying event that is the involuntary termination of a covered employee's employment.
- The involuntary termination must generally occur during the period that began September 1, 2008 and ends on March 31, 2010. (An involuntary termination of employment that occurs on or after March 2, 2010 but by March 31, 2010 and follows a qualifying event that was a reduction of hours that occurred at any time from September 1, 2008 through March 31, 2010 is also a qualifying event for purposes of ARRA.)

The premium reduction applies to periods of health coverage that began on or after February 17, 2009 and lasts for up to 15 months. See [Temporary Extension Act of 2010](http://www.dol.gov/ebsa/pdf/HR4691.pdf) - <http://www.dol.gov/ebsa/pdf/HR4691.pdf>

For more information on COBRA go to the Department of Labor's Employee Benefits Security Administration, which has updated the introduction on the COBRA webpage at <http://www.dol.gov/COBRA> to reflect the Temporary Extension Act of 2010.

SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (SBA)

SBA will extend the Recovery Lending Program - restarting Recovery loan approvals on 3/10/10

- The extended legislation will enable SBA to provide small business loans that are enhanced with special provisions of the Recovery Act. SBA estimates the additional funding will support about \$1.8 billion in small business lending.
- New approvals of eligible loans with the higher guarantee and reduced fees made possible by the Recovery Act are expected to resume on March 10. Loan applications from borrowers in SBA's Recovery Loan Queue will be funded first, followed by new loan applications.
- According to the press release, "The increased guarantee and reduced fees on SBA loans helped put almost \$22 billion into the hands of small business owners and brought more than 1,100 lenders back to SBA loan programs. As a result, average weekly loan approvals by SBA have climbed by 87 percent compared to the weekly average before passage of the Recovery Act.

For more information read the press statement at:

http://www.sba.gov/idc/groups/public/documents/sba_homepage/news_release_10-06.pdf

HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT (HUD)

According to the HUD press statement, more than 3,100 state and local government agencies have responded to their campaign to expand hiring and contracting opportunities for low-income persons. As a result of the effort, three out of four HUD-funded state and local agencies submitted required annual reports, the largest response since HUD made Section 3 reporting mandatory.

In October 2009, HUD contacted more than 3,500 agencies to remind them of their legal obligations to report their hiring and contracting efforts. Under Section 3 of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968, state and local governments that receive

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HUD funding are required to report how they use the funding to hire low- and very low-income individuals and public housing residents. Agencies are also, "to the greatest extent feasible," required to contract with companies that hire the residents.

Requiring recipients of HUD funding to report is the initial step in a two-year Section 3 Implementation Plan to increase hiring and training opportunities. Specific programs under the VCA will include training on the city's project development process, construction job preparation, and a no-interest revolving loan fund for Section 3 business concerns. Future activities will include awarding eight competitive grants ranging from \$50,000 to \$100,000 to help local governments hire Section 3 coordinators.

For additional information about HUD's Section3 program, go to: www.hud.gov/section3/.

To read the press statement about this effort, go to:

http://portal.hud.gov/portal/page/portal/HUD/press/press_releases_media_advisories/2010/HUDNo.10-044.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Race to the Top Finalists

The Department of Education has announced the 16 finalists in phase 1 of Race to the Top competition. Race to the Top is the Department's \$4.35 billion effort to dramatically re-shape America's educational system to better engage and prepare our students for success in a competitive 21st century economy and workplace. Winners for phase 1 will be chosen from among these 16 finalists and announced in April. Applications for phase 2 will be due on June 1 of this year, with finalists announced in August and winners in September. The only states prohibited from applying in phase 2 are those that receive awards in phase 1.

For more information go to: <http://www2.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2010/03/03042010.html>

EVENTS

- **Women's Transportation Seminar International 2010 Annual Conference - Washington, DC May 19 – 21**
The theme for this conference is The Right Place@ The Right Time. The conference will be held at the Capital Hilton. Keynote speakers include Ray LaHood, Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation. Session topics include the Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill; Delivering Intercity and High Speed Rail; and Transportation Safety. For more information go to www.wtsinternational.org or contact Margaret Mullins, Director of Operations, WTS 202.955.5085 x 102
- **The Department's Employment and Training Administration's (ETA) Office of Apprenticeship** will host a series of town hall meetings and a webinar listening session on plans to update Apprenticeship's Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) regulations (29 CFR part 30). The town hall meetings, to be held in Washington, DC, San Francisco, and Chicago throughout the month of March, will provide a forum for Registered Apprenticeship stakeholders and anyone else wishing to provide comments regarding possible revisions to the regulations. In the coming days, ETA will publish a Federal Register Notice to formally announce these meetings and to provide details for submitting suggestions and feedback.
For more information go to: http://www.doleta.gov/OA/pdf/Apprenticeship_Town_Hall_Meetings.pdf