

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Report



Yuma Private Industry Council

Reporting Period:
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Introduction

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 was signed into law by President Obama on February 17, 2009. The Recovery Act is intended to preserve and create jobs, promote the nation's economic recovery and assist those most impacted by the recession. Yuma County was awarded \$4.5 million for activities authorized under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) which will be administered by the Yuma Private Industry Council (YPIC). The Yuma Private Industry Council is a private non-profit organization whose purpose is to provide job seeker and employer services in the Yuma County labor market. Incorporated in 1988, YPIC serves as the Private Sector partner in the Public/Private Workforce Development Partnership with the Yuma County Board of Supervisors. With the advent of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), the Yuma County Board of Supervisors designated YPIC as the official operator or the "One-Stop" delivery system for workforce development services in Yuma County. The Yuma County Board of Supervisors also appoints the Workforce Investment Board which is housed in the organizational framework of YPIC. The Board draws membership from the community and is made up of representatives from all areas of the public, private, and non-profit sectors.

Summary of Activities

The Yuma Private Industry Council (YPIC) received \$4.5 million from the American Recovery and Investment Act. As reported last month, YPIC hired several dislocated workers and continues to do so. Five additional employees were hired during the last month. Two will work with the Summer Youth program developing and overseeing worksites and the three others will work in the adult and dislocated workers programs; two are resume writers and the other is a triage specialist.

Given the ARRA funds, YPIC has the opportunity to reinvent processes which are imperative due to the current numbers of persons being laid off and the skill level of those being laid off, which has significantly changed our customer base. The triage specialist will assess the needs of each customer and direct them to the appropriate services in a timely and efficient manner. This will create a better division of labor in the One Stop leading to a more structured process than in the past.

YPIC has also spent the last month focusing on the Summer Youth program after receiving \$2,233,600 for youth programs. The month was spent: scheduling and conducting eligibility appointments, reviewing files for completeness and distributing files to program providers. We have also been busy training YPIC staff and providers' staff. The great success in the process has been the willingness of the YPIC staff to take on new tasks as needed and work extended hours to ensure the program is successfully serving the youth of our community.

Many young people applied for the Summer Youth program including three brothers from Tacna, AZ. Tacna is a small farming community approximately 45 miles east of Yuma and as you can imagine there are not many services or opportunities for young people in such a rural community. The three brothers and their mother were anxious to talk about their family and what the Summer Youth program would mean to them. Fred is 14, Casey is 15 and Cameron is 17.



The three brothers are very courteous and friendly; they live with their mother and grandparents. They seemed to get along but were also forthcoming, as most siblings are, with a few jokes and barbs towards each other. Fred and Casey reported that they enjoy fishing with their grand-father, however, Fred added quickly that Cameron doesn't like to fish. When asked why he thought Cameron didn't like to fish, Fred responded that

Cameron thought he was "too cool" for fishing. All three boys enjoy gymnastics and look forward to graduating high school and leaving their small town. The brothers were recently in a talent show and performed a gymnastic routine and took second place. They told this interviewer they were only beat by a girls dance team who were all very cute.

Fred is in 8th grade and is a B student at Mohawk Valley Junior High. He enjoys his public speaking class and football. Fred recently joined the US Border Patrol's Explorer program and would like to be a firefighter when he graduates from high school. Fred said he intends to buy school clothes with the money he will earn this summer in the Summer Youth program, and is excited to know what the program is all about and what he will be doing in the program.

Casey is also in 8th grade at Mohawk Valley Junior High and he is an Explorer Officer with the Border Patrol. He stated the Border Patrol motivates him and brings discipline into his life. In school he enjoys sports and writing stories. Casey also intends to buy school clothes with the money he earns and said he hopes to work with the Border Patrol this summer. In fact he is so anxious to work with the Border Patrol that he gave this interviewer the name and phone number of the person that should be contacted to make those arrangements. Casey said he particularly enjoys working outside and hopes to do so this summer.

Cameron is the oldest and most thoughtful of the three brothers. Cameron is a junior at Antelope High School and also works part-time at a local sandwich shop. Cameron will be a senior next year and is looking forward to graduating. Cameron enjoys drama club, music and playing the guitar. When Cameron graduates he wants to go to Phoenix to attend a technical school to become a mechanic. Cameron stated he would do any job that was available this summer because he needs to save for a car and some school clothes. Cameron's mother explained that she had recently been in a wreck and the family car was totaled so she had to take Cameron's car. Cameron said he feels like he is responsible for buying another car.

The brothers look forward to the summer and asked if they would make it into the program. This interviewer told them it looked very promising for them and they should be hearing from one of our providers in the next few weeks. That resulted in high fives all around.

Summer Youth Projects

For the Summer Youth program, several projects have also been developed. The projects are intended to teach groups of youth specific skills. Some of the projects include:

Green Demonstration Project	Hands-on project in the development of a kinder playhouse utilizing green building and alternative energy methods. The students will receive training in hay bale, paper-crete, recycled metal building, safety procedures, OSHA requirements, development and design, adobe finish and lighting.
Mural Project	Hands-on project in the development of murals of supporting pillars of bridges over the park operated by the City of Yuma and Arizona Department of Transportation. The students will learn various mural design methods, focusing on outside long-term painting, mosaics and architectural design. Students design and present a mural plan to the City Parks and Recreation Board for selection of desired mural for the project. The students then implement the project by gaining skills from various experienced supervisors.
Dance Project	Students who have interests in dance, theater and film will be taught concepts of dance and how to relate these to school and employment opportunities. Students will learn budgeting, costume design, cultural differences, self esteem and team work skills. Students will choreograph dances around the theme of the mural project.
Culinary Arts Project	Students interested in culinary arts will learn nutrition, menus and catering. Students will learn how culinary arts relate to school and employment opportunities due to recent hotel growth in the Yuma area and transferable skills to take into larger communities. Students will cater the mural and dance projects final presentations.
Recreational Leadership Project	Students will receive hands-on training in the area of applied academics, art & crafts and recreational leadership. Students interested in teaching, childcare and academics will be taught the mechanics of mentoring and tutoring in relation to youth. Once the students have gained skills they will apply them to youth attending a summer camp within low income housing authorities. Students will meet daily after the camp to reflect on skills delivered and what needs to be changed to improve the next day.

In addition to the work projects, work experiences are also being developed countywide, to include Yuma, Somerton, Gadsden, San Luis, Wellton, Tacna and Dateland.

Timeline



- April 13 through April 23, conducted eligibility screening for about 800 applicants for the Summer Youth Program. (This picture is of families completing required paperwork while waiting for their eligibility appointments.)
- April 14, John Morales, YPIC's Executive Director, met with the Arizona Western College Governing Board to discuss the history of collaboration between YPIC and the college and to outline the ARRA's directives for working closely with institutions of higher education. YPIC would like for the college to provide short-term training classes for participants to earn certifications in areas driven by local employers.
- April 14, The Arizona Western College, Western Voice (student newspaper) published an article on the services available at YPIC.
- April 16, The Employment and Training Administration issued Change 1 to the Training & Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 14-08.
- April 16, YPIC staff attended a Webinar outlining the use of electronic training to assist customers with their job search. YPIC is exploring numerous on-line training options for customers.
- April 20, posted last months ARRA Report to the YPIC website and distributed to LWIB and others to ensure transparency. Will continue to post report each month.
- April 27, Mr. Morales chaired the Arizona Association of Workforce Developers meeting in Phoenix. During the meeting the Arizona Department of Economic Security and Department of Commerce outlined the state's progress on the programs funded by the stimulus package.
- April 29, YPIC conducted a strategic planning session with its management team emphasizing the unique challenges and opportunities associated with the ARRA. John Morales issued a challenge to the leadership of YPIC:



“Utilize the stimulus funding of ARRA to reinvent a Workforce Development system that addresses the real needs of people, businesses and communities. In Yuma County, this means serving those who are suffering from job losses, unemployment and the need for training that makes them competitive in the new economic environment. We must break the cycle of low-paying jobs and the shortage of highly skilled workers. We need to fill the gap in educational providers for technology, finding ways to meet rapidly changing needs. We must

act aggressively to build a system that promotes and facilitates development of a highly skilled workforce, well prepared for increasingly high levels of performance in the interest of improving our communities and the regional and national economy.”

- April 30, John Morales met with the Arizona Department of Economic Security Employment Administration to discuss the opportunity for collaboration using YPIC's Somerton, AZ Career Center to train farm workers in their rights as farm

workers. DES will provide the curriculum and YPIC will provide the trainer. The group also discussed how DES could assist YPIC in recruiting participants by referring DES clients to YPIC.

- May 4, John Morales spoke with Arizona Western College staff to discuss the possibility of AWC providing accelerated English classes for Spanish speakers.
- May 5, John Morales had a discussion with Excel (a local behavioral health provider) to ask if Excel could provide YPIC's front-line staff with training to deal with customers who have experienced mental trauma through loss of a job.
- May 5, John Morales met with the director of the Yuma County Chamber of Commerce to discuss how ARRA funds could assist small businesses with outreach and survival tactics.
- May 5, John Morales also met with South County representatives to discuss possible jobs at the new Port of Entry in San Luis, AZ.
- May 11 – 16, YPIC continued to conduct eligibility screening for approximately 250 youth, ages 19-24.
- May 13, YPIC provided training to Summer Youth providers on the State's Virtual One Stop (VOS) System to ensure the understanding of the changes required by ARRA and to issue instruction on proper data entry into the system so that valid information is obtained for reporting and tracking purposes.
- During the last month, YPIC has had numerous meetings and training sessions for



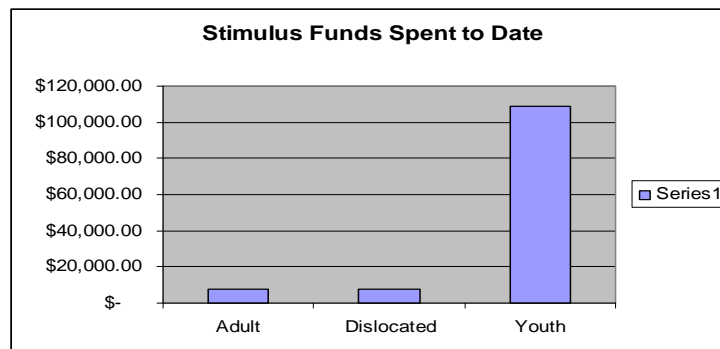
internal staff to discuss and plan the Summer Youth program. These sessions included staff from all areas of the company, including Youth Services, the One Stop, follow-up services, IT, HR, and accounting just to name a few.

Successes

- The hiring of dislocated workers for Summer Youth program.
- The willingness of the community to work with YPIC. Over the years YPIC has built a solid reputation for service and collaboration in Yuma County and employers are turning to YPIC to assist in this time of economic downturn.
- Employers are anxious to hire summer youth participants. It has been several years since we have had such a large program and the community is excited.
- A large percentage of families did not return required eligibility documents, so YPIC staff is going out into the community to gather those documents. Staff is taking portable copiers with them to copy documents.
- The younger youth, ages 14-15 that live in the more rural communities such as Dateland, Tacna and Mohawk have a difficult time getting to the job and project sites. We have contracted with the Yuma County School Bus Consortium to transport the participants.
- The IT department has had to continually update the participant database to accommodate the Summer Youth program and purchase and set-up new computers and phones for the additional Summer Youth staff. Updating the database resulted in some streamlining of the database.

Challenges

- Implementing the ARRA program while continuing to run the WIA program has presented some challenges. We have had to reorganize and cross train staff, hire new staff and modify the way we conduct business.
- Eligibility methodology has been an obstacle to youth being found eligible for the Summer Youth program. Due to eligibility guidelines, we are screening at least double the number of applicants thus resulting in many being turned away. The poverty guidelines need to be reviewed to take into consideration the current situations of the new poor in our country. The guidelines do not speak to labor market realities or extraordinary circumstances and YPIC has no local level authority to make changes in the eligibility criteria.
- Under ARRA, school free lunch is no longer an eligibility criterion so many families did not meet income criteria due to required income calculation.
- TEGL 14-08 Change 1 encouraged workforce systems to serve farm workers and their dependents and to outreach and enroll farm worker youth in summer employment opportunities. However, due to the farming season recently ending in Yuma County, the youth of these families will not qualify for the program due to the constraints of the income guidelines.
- Due to low numbers of applicants being eligible for the program, we have had to re-advertise and begin the eligibility process over again, resulting in later start date for some of the participants.
- YPIC had not been able to draw down funds from the State for the ARRA program. However; we are working closely with the State Fiscal Department and hope this happens soon.



Next Steps

- One of the priorities will be putting into place the strategies developed during the strategic planning meeting, embedding the changes in the front-line staff and monitoring implementation based on the spirit and intent of TEGL 14-08.
- Determine how YPIC will transform what we do into where we should be now that we have funding to make changes. This is an opportunity to reinvent ourselves. We will need to take into account the cultural and socio-economic status, isolation factor of Yuma County, low education rates (only 37% of residents have high school diplomas), and state budget problems. We are now facing problems metropolitan areas have dealt with for years with the number of lay-offs and for the first time many of the people being laid-off have higher education levels and require a different form of assistance.
- Form focus groups of dislocated workers to find out their needs.
- Continue to develop worksites and hire and train staff for the Summer Youth programs.
- IT will finalize the participant database and work with providers on their databases.
- Draw down money and report expenditures to the State.
- Develop a Yuma County Workforce and Economic Development Summit-Phase II. The last summit created five community labor market studies that examined potential strategies for Yuma County. So much has happened since 2001, including loss of WIA funding. The ARRA presents a unique opportunity to engage multiple partners in a community planning effort that looks to the future, including job forecasts, examining skill gaps, green jobs, and the impact of Boomers exiting the labor force.
- Enhanced employer outreach development strategies. We are exploring the partnering with the Chamber of Commerce to do additional outreach to small businesses. This could include offering workshops on how to deal with downsizing, how to conduct lay-offs, etc. We are also exploring enhanced Business Retention strategies with the Greater Economic Development Corporation that could lead to lay-off aversion activities.
- Exploration of accelerated vocational English as a second language strategy through partnerships with the Community College and Community Based Organizations.
- Explore how WIC assistance can support the entrepreneurial process and encourage business start-ups.