

## **Draft Language and Commentary to Implement a Short-Time Compensation Program**

### **I. Draft Language**

#### **A. Definitions**

1. The term “affected unit” means a specified plant, department, shift, or other definable unit which includes \_\_\_\_ or more workers to which an approved short-time compensation plan applies.
2. The term “Director” means the state agency official designated to perform primary oversight of the unemployment compensation program, or any delegate or subordinate responsible for approving applications for participation in a short-time compensation plan.
3. The term “health and retirement benefits” means employer-provided health benefits, and retirement benefits under a defined benefit pension plan (as defined in section 414(j) of the Internal Revenue Code or contributions under a defined contribution plan (defined in section 414(i) of such Code), which are incidents of employment in addition to the cash remuneration earned.
4. The term “short-time compensation” means the unemployment benefits payable to employees in an affected unit under an approved short-time compensation plan, as distinguished from the unemployment benefits otherwise payable under the unemployment compensation provisions of a State law.
5. The term “short-time compensation plan” means a plan submitted by an employer, for approval by the Director, under which the employer requests the payment of short-time compensation to workers in an affected unit of the employer to avert layoffs.
6. The term “usual weekly hours of work” means the usual hours of work for full-time or part-time employees in the affected unit when that unit is operating on its regular basis, not to exceed forty hours and not including hours of overtime work.
7. The term “unemployment compensation” means the unemployment benefits payable under this Act other than short-time compensation and includes any amounts payable pursuant to an agreement under any

Federal law providing for compensation, assistance, or allowances with respect to unemployment.

**B. Application to Participate in the Short-Time Compensation Program**

An employer wishing to participate in the short-time compensation program shall submit a signed written short-time compensation plan to the Director for approval. The Director shall develop an application form to request approval of a short-time compensation plan and an approval process. The application shall include:

1. The affected unit (or units) covered by the plan, including the number of full-time or part-time workers in such unit, the percentage of workers in the affected unit covered by the plan, identification of each individual employee in the affected unit by name, social security number, and the employer's unemployment tax account number and any other information required by the Director to identify plan participants.
2. A description of how workers in the affected unit will be notified of the employer's participation in the short-time compensation plan if such application is approved, including how the employer will notify those workers in a collective bargaining unit as well as any workers in the affected unit who are not in a collective bargaining unit. If the employer will not provide advance notice to workers in the affected unit, the employer shall explain in a statement in the application why it is not feasible to provide such notice.
3. A requirement that the employer identify the usual weekly hours of work for employees in the affected unit and the specific percentage by which their hours will be reduced during all weeks covered by the plan. An application shall specify the percentage of reduction for which a short-time compensation application may be approved which shall be not less than 10 percent and not more than 60 percent. If the plan includes any week for which the employer regularly provides no work (due to a holiday or other plant closing), then such week shall be identified in the application.
4. Certification by the employer that, if the employer provides health benefits and retirement benefits under defined benefit pension plans (as defined in section 414(j) of the Internal Revenue Code) or contributions under a defined contribution plan (defined in section 414(i) of such Code) to any employee whose usual weekly hours of work are reduced under the program, such benefits will continue to be provided to employees participating the short-time compensation program under the same terms and conditions as though the usual

weekly hours of work of such employee had not been reduced or to the same extent as other employees not participating in the short-time compensation program.

For defined benefit retirement plans, the hours that are reduced under the short-time compensation plan shall be credited for purposes of participation, vesting, and accrual of benefits as though the usual weekly hours of work had not been reduced. The dollar amount of employer contributions to a defined contribution plan that are based on a percentage of compensation may be less due to the reduction in the employee's compensation.

Notwithstanding the above, an application may contain the required certification when a reduction in health and retirement benefits scheduled to occur during the duration of the plan will be applicable equally to employees who are not participating in the short-time compensation program and to those employees who are participating.

5. Certification by the employer that the aggregate reduction in work hours is in lieu of layoffs (temporary or permanent layoffs, or both). The application shall include an estimate of the number of workers who would have been laid off in the absence of the short-time compensation plan.
6. Agreement by the employer to: furnish reports to the Director relating to the proper conduct of the plan; allow the Director or his authorized representatives access to all records necessary to approve or disapprove the plan application, after approval of a plan, to monitor and evaluate the plan; and follow any other directives the Director deems necessary for the agency to implement the plan and which are consistent with the requirements for plan applications.
7. Certification by the employer that participation in the short-time compensation plan and its implementation is consistent with the employer's obligations under applicable Federal and State laws.
8. The effective date and duration of the plan that shall expire not later than the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> full calendar month after the effective date.
9. Any other provision added to the application by the Director that the United States Secretary of Labor determines to be appropriate for purposes of a short-time compensation program.

**C. Approval and Disapproval of the Short-time Compensation Plan**

The Director shall approve or disapprove a short-time compensation plan in writing within \_\_ days of its receipt and promptly communicate the decision to the employer. A decision disapproving the plan shall clearly identify the reasons for the disapproval. The disapproval shall be final, but the employer shall be allowed to submit another short-time compensation plan for approval not earlier than \_\_ days from the date of the disapproval.

**D. Effective Date and Duration of the Short-time Compensation Plan**

A short-time compensation plan shall be effective on the date that is mutually agreed upon by the employer and the Director, which shall be specified in the notice of approval to the employer. The plan shall expire on the date specified in the notice of approval, which shall be either the date at the end of the 12th full calendar month after its effective date or an earlier date mutually agreed upon by the employer and the Director. However, if a short-time compensation plan is revoked by the Director under paragraph E of this Act, the plan shall terminate on the date specified in the Director's written order of revocation. An employer may terminate a short-time compensation plan at any time upon written notice to the Director. Upon receipt of such notice from the employer, the Director shall promptly notify each member of the affected unit of the termination date. An employer may submit a new application to participate in another short-time compensation plan at any time after the expiration or termination date.

**E. Revocation of Approval**

The Director may revoke approval of a short-time compensation plan for good cause at any time, including upon the request of any of the affected unit's employees. The revocation order shall be in writing and shall specify the reasons for the revocation and the date the revocation is effective.

The Director may periodically review the operation of each employer's short-time compensation plan to assure that no good cause exists for revocation of the approval of the plan. Good cause shall include, but not be limited to, failure to comply with the assurances given in the plan, unreasonable revision of productivity standards for the affected unit, conduct or occurrences tending to defeat the intent and effective operation of the short-time compensation plan, and violation of any criteria on which approval of the plan was based.

**F. Modification of an Approved Short-time Compensation Plan**

An employer may request a modification of an approved plan by filing a written request to the Director. The request shall identify the specific provisions proposed to be modified and provide an explanation of why the proposed modification is appropriate for the short-time compensation plan. The Director shall approve or disapprove the proposed modification in writing within days of receipt and promptly communicate the decision to the employer.

The Director, in his or her discretion, may approve a request for modification of the plan based on conditions that have changed since the plan was approved provided that the modification is consistent with and supports the purposes for which the plan was initially approved. A modification does not extend the expiration date of the original plan, and the Director must promptly notify the employer whether the plan modification has been approved and, if approved, the effective date of the modification.

An employer is not required to request approval of a plan modification from the Director if the change is not substantial, but the employer must report every change to the plan to the Director promptly and in writing. The Director may terminate an employer's plan if the employer fails to meet this reporting requirement. If the Director determines that the reported change is substantial, the Director shall require the employer to request a modification to the plan.

**G. Eligibility for Short-Time Compensation**

An individual is eligible to receive short-time compensation with respect to any week only if the individual is monetarily eligible for unemployment compensation, not otherwise disqualified for unemployment compensation, and:

- (1) During the week, the individual is employed as a member of an affected unit under an approved short-time compensation plan, which was approved prior to that week, and the plan is in effect with respect to the week for which short-time compensation is claimed.
- (2) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this Act relating to availability for work and actively seeking work, the individual is available for the individual's usual hours of work with the short-time compensation employer, which may include, for purposes of this section, participating in training to enhance job skills that is approved by the Director such as employer-sponsored training or training funded under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998.

(3) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, an individual covered by a short-time compensation plan is deemed unemployed in any week during the duration of such plan if the individual's remuneration as an employee in an affected unit is reduced based a reduction of the individual's usual weekly hours of work under an approved short-time compensation plan.

## **H. Benefits**

1. The short-time compensation weekly benefit amount shall be the product of the regular weekly unemployment compensation amount for a week of total unemployment multiplied by the percentage of reduction in the individual's usual weekly hours of work.
2. An individual may be eligible for short-time compensation or unemployment compensation, as appropriate, except that no individual shall be eligible for combined benefits in any benefit year in an amount more than the maximum entitlement established for regular unemployment compensation, nor shall an individual be paid short-time compensation benefits for more than 52 weeks under a short-time compensation plan.
3. The short-time compensation paid to an individual shall be deducted from the maximum entitlement amount of regular unemployment compensation established for that individual's benefit year.
4. Provisions applicable to unemployment compensation claimants shall apply to short-time compensation claimants to the extent that they are not inconsistent with short-time compensation provisions. An individual who files an initial claim for short-time compensation benefits shall receive a monetary determination.
5. The following provisions apply to individuals who work for both a short-time compensation employer and another employer during weeks covered by the approved short-time compensation plan.
  - (a) If combined hours of work in a week for both employers does not result in a reduction of at least 10 percent (or, if higher, the minimum percentage of reduction required to be eligible for a short-time compensation benefit as provided in State law) of the usual weekly hours of work with the short-time employer, the individual shall not be entitled to benefits under these short-time compensation provisions.
  - (b) If the combined hours of work for both employers results in a reduction equal to or greater than 10 percent (or, if higher, the minimum percentage reduction required to be eligible for a short-time

compensation benefit as provided in state law) of the usual weekly hours of work for the short-time compensation employer, the short-time compensation benefit amount payable to the individual is reduced for that week and is determined by multiplying the weekly unemployment benefit amount for a week of total unemployment by the percentage by which the combined hours of work have been reduced by 10 percent (or, if higher, the minimum percentage reduction required to be eligible for a short-time compensation benefit as provided in state law ) or more of the individual's usual weekly hours of work. A week for which benefits are paid under this provision shall be reported as a week of short-time compensation.

(c) If an individual worked the reduced percentage of the usual weekly hours of work for the short-time compensation employer and is available for all his usual hours of work with the short-time compensation employer, and the individual did not work any hours for the other employer, either because of the lack of work with that employer or because the individual is excused from work with the other employer, the individual shall be eligible for short-time compensation for that week. The benefit amount for such week shall be calculated as provided in 1 of this section.

6. An individual who is not provided any work during a week by the short-time compensation employer, or any other employer, and who is otherwise eligible for unemployment compensation shall be eligible for the amount of regular unemployment compensation to which they would otherwise be eligible.
7. An individual who is not provided any work by the short-time compensation employer during a week, but who works for another employer and is otherwise eligible may be paid unemployment compensation for that week subject to the disqualifying income and other provisions applicable to claims for regular compensation.

#### **I. Charging Short-Time Compensation Benefits**

Short-time compensation shall be charged to employers' experience rating accounts in the same manner as unemployment compensation is charged under the State law. Employers liable for payments in lieu of contributions shall have short-time compensation attributed to service in their employ in the same manner as unemployment compensation is attributed.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a limited time period, as discussed in UIPL No. 22-12, a state may relieve an employer of charges or not require reimbursement for STC benefits if they are subject to 100 percent reimbursement by the Federal government.

## **J. Extended Benefits**

An individual who has received all of the short-time compensation or combined unemployment compensation and short-time compensation available in a benefit year shall be considered an exhaustee for purposes of extended benefits, as provided under the provisions of section \_\_ , and, if otherwise eligible under those provisions, shall be eligible to receive extended benefits.

## **II. Commentary on Draft Language for a Short-Time Compensation Program**

A State is not required to operate a short-time compensation or “STC” program. However, if it does so, the program must be consistent with the requirements of Section 3306(v) of the Federal Unemployment Tax Act (FUTA) as added by The Layoff Prevention Act of 2012 (Subtitle D of Title II of Public Law (Pub. L.) 112-96). Section 3306(v), FUTA, provides the criteria that a State must follow to assure that approval of an STC plan is consistent with Federal requirements. The model legislation incorporates those criteria and identifies provisions that are necessary to implement state STC programs. The implementation provisions address eligibility conditions, criteria for approval and revocation of STC plans, and entitlement of individuals who work in the employ of employers other than the STC employer.

States may need to change various provisions of the model legislation in order to meet their own statutory formats and requirements. Any substantive modifications or additions must, however, be consistent with requirements of the FUTA and Title III of the Social Security Act. Additionally, states should examine whether the provisions of State law relating to withdrawal of money from the unemployment fund include authorization to withdraw money to pay STC benefits. States may need to update such provisions if the provisions limit the withdrawal to pay STC under the authority of either Section 194 of the Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 1982 (Pub. L. 97-248) or Section 401 of the Unemployment Compensation Amendments of 1992 (Pub. L. 102-318).

The following is a section by section commentary on the provisions contained in the model legislation.

### **A. Definitions**

1. **Affected Unit** – The employer must identify the affected unit to which the application to participate in the STC plan applies to help the Director administer the plan. Since the employer must certify that its application to participate in the STC program is in lieu of making temporary or permanent “layoffs” within the affected unit, then the affected unit must, at a minimum, include two workers. However, for purposes of the State STC program, a State may

choose to increase the minimum number of workers in an affected unit to a higher number, and the blank in the model language is intended to afford some flexibility for the State. However, a State should not set such a high minimum number that would inhibit meaningful participation of the state employers in the STC program.

2. Director - The state official with oversight responsibility for the unemployment compensation program, or the designate of the official, with authority to approve an STC application.
3. Health and Retirement Benefits – The term refers to health benefits and retirement benefits under specific types of pension plans identified in the section 3306(v), FUTA definition by reference to the IRC. The requirements in connection with these benefits are described fully in the requirements for the plan application.
4. Short-Time Compensation (STC) – The term refers to a payment made to workers who are working reduced hours under an STC plan, and the payment is different from regular unemployment compensation in the amount payable and the conditions of entitlement.
5. Short-Time Compensation Plan (STC Plan) – The term refers to a plan approved by the Director when an employer requests approval for the payment of STC to employees within an affected unit of the employer when the employer reduces the hours of work in the affected unit in lieu of “layoffs.” The layoffs may be temporary or permanent.
6. Usual Weekly Hours of Work – The usual hours of work of full-time and regular part-time workers in the affected unit. Overtime hours are not included as part of usual weekly hours of work.

The model language specifically includes regular part-time workers as individuals in an affected unit who may be included as participants in an approved STC plan. These part-time workers must be regular employees of the employer who normally work part-time hours as distinguished from part-time workers who work on a seasonal, temporary or intermittent basis. A state STC law may not limit participation only to full-time workers.

7. Unemployment compensation (UC) – The term is used here solely for purposes of distinguishing benefits paid under the regular unemployment compensation program from those paid under the STC program. It applies to any regular, extended, or additional

unemployment compensation payable under State law, and any amounts payable in accordance with agreements between the State and the Secretary of Labor under any Federal unemployment compensation law. The distinction made here does not alter the designation of STC as a form of unemployment compensation for other applicable purposes.

**B. Applications to Participate in the Short-Time Compensation Program**

This section prescribes the content of an STC plan application under the requirements of Section 3306(v), FUTA:

1. The application must require the employer to describe the affected unit(s) in enough detail so that the Director may properly administer such claims. For example, both of the following are acceptable: Plant A at 123 Walnut Street; the finishing department at Plant A, 123 Walnut Street.

The employees covered by the plan need to be identified so that their claim records can be distinguished from non-STC plan claimants employed by the same employer. STC plan claimants will be entitled to a different weekly benefit amount than regular claimants. The number of weeks for which STC benefits are payable and the expiration date of the plan must be noted.

2. Section 3306(v)(8), FUTA, requires that an application to participate in an STC plan include “a plan for giving advance notice, where feasible, to an employee whose usual weekly hours of work is to be reduced ...” If all of the employees in an affected unit are covered by the same collective bargaining agreement, a description of how notice will be provided to the collective bargaining representative will suffice. However, if the affected unit includes members not covered by a collective bargaining agreement, the employer must include in the application a description of how the employer will provide notice of the plan to those workers.

Although the Department anticipates that employers will provide the required notice, if advance notification to the workers is not considered feasible by the employer, a detailed explanation must be provided in the application.

3. The application shall require the employer to specify the specific percentage of reduction in hours worked by the affected employees. The range of reduction that a state will approve in a STC plan must be in accord with the Section 3306(v)(3), FUTA,

requirement that an STC plan is one where the workers hours are reduced by at least 10 percent but no more than 60 percent.

A State law may specify a narrower range of the reduction in the usual hours of work that it will approve an STC plan. For example, a state may change the range of reduction in the hours of work from 20 percent to 50 percent.

4. The certification in the application relating to the continued provision of health and retirement benefits implements Section 3306(v)(7), FUTA, which requires an employer to certify that “if the employer provides health benefits and retirement benefits under a defined benefit plan (as defined in section 414(j)) [of the Internal Revenue Code ] or contributions under a defined contribution plan (as defined in section 414(i) ) to any employee whose workweek is reduced under the program that such benefits will continue to be provided to employees participating in the short-time compensation program under the same terms and conditions as though the workweek of such employee had not been reduced or to the same extent as other employees not participating in the short-time compensation program.”

The employer may not reduce the health or specified retirement benefits to individuals participating in the STC program. However, this provision does not apply if a reduction in such health and specified retirement benefits applies to all employees, and is not limited to STC participants.

The employer may not reduce health insurance benefits it provides to employees in the affected unit based upon the reduction in hours that is part of the employer’s participation in the plan.

The following two paragraphs of this commentary provide general information about retirement plans and are not intended to be a comprehensive statement of the complex laws on retirement plans.

In general, a defined contribution retirement plan is a retirement investment account. Section 414(i) of the Internal Revenue Code defines such a contribution plan as “a plan which provides for an individual account for each participant and for benefits based solely on the amount contributed to the participant’s account, and any income, expenses, gains and losses, and any forfeitures of accounts of other participants may be allocated to such participant’s account.”

In general, a defined benefit retirement benefit plan (as defined in

Section 414(j) of the Internal Revenue Code) is not a contribution plan but one where the monthly retirement benefit amount is determined based on a computation formula specified in the plan. The retirement benefit is “defined” because the formula for computing benefits is known in advance of retirement and it is not contingent on investment income.

5. As part of any approval of an employer to participate in an STC program, the state must verify that the application includes a certification by the employer that maintains a retirement plan (either a defined benefit plan or a defined contribution plan) for an employee who has a reduction in the usual weekly hours of work under the employer’s proposed plan that benefits (in the case of a defined benefit plan) and employer contributions (in the case of a defined contribution plan) will continue to be provided to the employee under the same terms and conditions as though the employee’s usual weekly hours of work were not reduced.

For purposes of granting approval of the STC plan, employees participating in the employer’s STC plan must be allowed to maintain coverage in the retirement plan under the same terms and conditions as employees not participating in the STC plan. The hours that were reduced under the STC plan must be credited for purposes of participation, vesting, and accrual of benefits as though the usual weekly hours of work had not been reduced. The dollar amount of employer contributions to a defined contribution plan that are based on a percentage of compensation may be less due to the reduction in the employee’s compensation

The certification by the employer that that the aggregate reduction in work hours is in lieu of layoffs, coupled with the requirement for the employer to estimate the number of workers who would have been laid off in the absence of the STC plan, is intended to demonstrate that the STC plan will be used solely to avert layoffs. The estimate of the numbers of averted layoffs also is needed for the states to be able to fulfill the reporting requirement of the Act, which section 2165(a)(3)(A) of the Layoff Prevention Act of 2012 requires the Secretary of Labor to establish.

The term “layoffs” in the model legislation, as used in the sentence that the application include a certification by the employer that the aggregate reduction in hours under the STC plan is “in lieu of layoffs”, means the temporary or permanent layoff of employees within an affected unit. Previously, Federal law required the employer to request approval to implement an STC plan only when the layoffs made by the employer in the absence of

an STC plan would have been on a “temporary” basis. There no longer is any Federal requirement for the employer to determine that the layoffs within the affected unit would have been temporary when applying to participate in the state STC program and the state may not limit approval to plans that are in lieu of temporary layoffs.

6. The required agreement by the employer to furnish reports to the Director is intended to address the potential need to examine company records if needed in order to approve an application in accordance with the provisions of the Act. Additionally, access to employer records may be necessary to determine whether the plan is operating as approved or whether approval should be revoked.
7. The STC employer must attest that participation in the plan is consistent with its obligations under Federal and State laws.
8. The application must include a date that the employer proposes to begin the plan and a date when it proposes to end the plan.
9. The application must include any other provisions added by the Director that are included in the State law and, pursuant to a request from the State, have been determined by the Secretary of the United States Department of Labor to be appropriate for an STC plan.

**C. Approval and Disapproval of the Plan**

The Act must specify the period of time for the Director to approve or disapprove a plan. This requirement is intended to facilitate prompt implementation of an approved STC plan by an employer.

If the STC plan is disapproved, the Director must specify the reason(s) for disapproval. These are good administrative practices, and informing the applicant-employer of the reason(s) for the plan's disapproval provides the employer the opportunity to remedy them in a revised application if the employer wishes to reapply to participate in the STC program.

If a state chooses to provide for administrative appeal by the employer-applicant, the model provision for approval or disapproval of a plan should be modified to provide for appeal rights under the current administrative review provisions of its State law.

The model language provides for the establishment of a minimum period of time before an employer whose application has been rejected may submit another plan. The intent is to preclude a hasty second submission

without adequate correction of the reason(s) causing disapproval of the earlier plan, but States may consider limiting such period to the minimum necessary to meet that intent in order to encourage participation in the STC program.

**D. Effective Date and Duration of Plan**

Both the employer and the agency need time to prepare for implementation of the plan once it is approved. Therefore, the effective date of the plan will be determined by agreement between the employer and the Director and the mutually agreed upon effective date will be included in the notice of approval to the employer.

The needs of employers and employees, and economic conditions may change dramatically in one year's time and developing a plan for multiple years that effectively forecasts such needs and conditions is extremely difficult. Accordingly, the model legislation limits the approval of an STC plan to no longer than a 12-month period. At the end of such period, an employer may submit a new STC plan and the Director can review it based upon current economic conditions.

Since participation in an STC plan is voluntary, an employer may terminate a plan at any time but must send written notice to the Director of the termination. The Director will then promptly notify workers covered by the STC plan of the termination of the plan by the employer. Just as the plan is required to indicate how employees will be notified when their hours will be reduced under the plan, the employer should also notify employees of the termination of the plan.

**E. Revocation of Approval**

The model language would provide the Director with the authority to revoke approval of the STC plan based on good cause, including the failure to comply with assurances provided in the plan such as that the aggregate reduction in hours is in lieu of layoffs. This provision authorizes the Director to periodically monitor the operation by the employer of the approved plan to assure no good cause exists for revocation.

**F. Modification of an Approved Plan**

An employer may seek modifications to an approved short-time compensation plan. For example, the conditions under which a plan was initially submitted and approved may change. These provisions permit such revisions under specified conditions. A State may, on the other hand, prefer to require the submission and approval of a new plan in lieu of plan modifications. If this approach is chosen, these provisions will need to be

changed accordingly.

If a modification is desired, an employer must identify the provisions to be modified and explain why the modifications are necessary and consistent with the purposes for which the plan was approved. The Director is to evaluate this information and may approve or deny the request for modification.

For example, economic conditions might improve, and the employer may wish to increase the workers' hours. If the state STC law permits a reduction of hours between 10 percent and 60 percent and the plan was approved based on a 30 percent reduction in hours, the employer may subsequently request instead a 15 percent reduction of hours in the affected unit.

Conversely, an employer may request to modify an STC plan because economic conditions have worsened for the employer. If an STC plan was initially approved based on an estimate that 5 layoffs will be avoided if there is a 25 percent reduction in hours by the employees in the affected unit, but the employer's business suffers more losses than expected, the employer may request a modification to avert the layoff of additional members of the affected unit by increasing the percentage of reduction of the number of hours worked by individuals in the affected unit.

In addition, the Director may be asked to modify an STC plan when one employer submitted the application and there has been a sale or succession of the business to a different employer. The Director may require the new employer to submit a new application or the Director may permit the new employer to modify the approved STC plan to substitute it as the employer if the substitution is consistent with the purposes for which the plan was approved. The substituted employer must agree to abide by all the terms of the approved plan.

If a modification to a plan is not substantial, then a formal process of approval may not be necessary. For example, if an employee in the affected unit finds a new job and separates from the employer, the plan would not generally have to be formally modified in order for the employer to remove the employee's name from the plan. In addition, an unexpected one week reduction in hours may not require a modification. For example, if the plan requires a 25 percent reduction in hours of workers in the affected unit, the employer would not necessarily be required to request a modification to the plan to reduce the hours worked by a greater percentage (but no more than 60 percent) for only one week during the term of the plan.

However, the employer must promptly notify the Director of this temporary deviation from the terms of the approved plan. If the Director determines such change to be substantial, the Director shall require that the employer submit a formal request to the Director for approval of the modifications.

**G. Eligibility for Short-Time Compensation**

To qualify for STC, an individual must meet certain eligibility requirements for regular UC. The model language provides that an individual must be monetarily eligible for unemployment compensation and not otherwise disqualified. Among these requirements are the wage qualification requirement, disqualification provisions, waiting period and modified claim filing and reporting procedures.

In addition to the requirements applicable to regular UC, the model language specifies a number of other eligibility requirements that are specific to STC.

First, the individual must be employed in the affected unit identified under an approved STC plan, and may be eligible for benefits only for those weeks in which the plan is in effect.

Second, notwithstanding the able to work, available for work, and work search requirements that would otherwise be applicable under regular UC, the individual may be eligible for STC for any week during the approved STC plan that the individual is available for their usual weekly hours of work with the STC employer. The hours an individual participates in training approved by the Director (which may include employer-provided training or training funded under the Workforce Investment Act) will be credited towards the availability of an individual for the usual weekly hours.

Third, notwithstanding the definition of unemployment in the State law which would not permit an STC employee to be deemed unemployed because of the amount of services performed and wages earned, an individual may be eligible for STC if the individual receives remuneration in accordance with the reduction in the usual weekly hours of work specified in the STC plan. However, as further explained in Section H -6 below, an STC employee who works for another employer in addition to the hours worked for the STC employer in the same week may not be eligible for STC depending on the number of hours worked.

**H. Benefits**

1. The STC weekly benefit amount is the product of the unemployment compensation weekly benefit amount for a week of total unemployment multiplied by the percentage by which the usual weekly hours of work are reduced as long as the usual weekly hours of work are reduced in accordance with the reduction in the usual weekly hours of work specified in the approved short-time compensation plan. This STC weekly benefit amount is payable for each week for which the claimant is otherwise eligible, regardless of the individual's earnings and the deductible income provisions under State law.

Example A: The weekly benefit amount is \$100 based on usual hours of work and earnings of \$200. The STC plan provides for a 30 percent reduction in weekly hours and the STC weekly benefit amount is \$30. An individual in the affected unit who works the reduced hours with the STC employer will be paid pro rata wages of \$140 and the STC weekly benefit amount of \$30.

Example B: The weekly benefit amount is \$100 based on *usual hours of work* and earnings of \$200. The STC plan provides for usual weekly hours of work to be reduced by 30 percent and the STC weekly benefit amount to be \$30. However, an individual in the affected unit works the same reduced hours with the STC employer but the *earnings* for that week are variable as a result of a raise or *other compensation* from the employer and results in pro rata wages of \$155. The individual will still receive the STC weekly benefit amount of \$30 because the STC benefit is based on the portion of reduced hours and not the weekly earnings.

2. An individual may be eligible for STC or regular UC, as appropriate, but the maximum benefit amount for the combination of STC and UC is the total amount of UC an individual is entitled to collect when a claim is filed and a benefit year is established.

For example, if individuals are eligible for 26 weeks of regular UC and an STC plan permits the payment of 52 weeks of STC based on a percentage of reduction in hours greater than 50 percent an individual will exhaust the entitlement to STC in fewer than 52 weeks since the individual is subject to the maximum benefit amount for regular UC. If individuals are eligible for less than 26 weeks of regular UC, in this scenario, they would be eligible for even fewer weeks of STC payments.

3. STC payments must be deducted from the maximum amount an individual may receive in regular unemployment compensation

during a benefit year.

4. Claims for STC benefits may, in general, follow the procedures for regular UC. Special procedures to reflect unusual situations should be adopted for STC claims as they are for unemployment compensation claims in special situations. The Director may suitably modify procedures to promote the efficient processing of STC claims.

State law eligibility and disqualification provisions and claim filing requirements that apply to regular UC claimants may apply or may be modified to apply to STC claimants. The availability and actively seeking work requirements and the partial benefit provisions do not, however, apply except to the extent prescribed under the STC program eligibility requirements. Thus, it does not matter whether the employee's usual weekly hours of work for the STC employer was 40 hours, or the worker was working a permanent part time schedule and the usual weekly hours of work was less than 40 hours before the STC plan was in effect. The following provisions address situations where workers have employment with employers (either on a part time or full time basis) in addition to the STC employer.

5. The following provisions address situations where workers have employment with employers (either on a part time or full time basis) in addition to the STC employer.

- (a) When an individual works for an STC employer and another employer, and the combined work hours exceed the percentage of the usual weekly hours of work with the STC employer specified in the STC plan, the individual is not entitled to STC or regular UC because there is no reduction in the usual hours of work.

For example, in an STC plan, the hours of an individual in full-time work for the STC employer are reduced from 40 to 32. The individual also works 10 hours with another employer. Since the combined hours of work (42) exceed the individual's usual hours of work with the STC employer, there is no STC benefit entitlement.

- (b) When an individual works for an STC employer and another employer, and the combined work hours is equal to a reduction of at least 10 percent (or, if higher, the minimum reduction required to be eligible for an STC benefit under State law) of the individual's usual weekly hours of work with the STC employer, the individual is eligible for a reduced STC benefit calculated

based on the combined percentage reduction below the usual weekly hours of work with the STC employer.

For example, in an STC plan, the affected unit consists of individuals who work full-time and the plan is approved for a 20 percent reduction in hours from 40 hours to 32 hours by the STC employer. Workers in the affected unit who only work for the STC employer will be paid a STC benefit equal to the 20 percent reduction in hours multiplied by the amount of UC payable if the individuals were totally unemployed.

If the individual has combined work of 4 hours with another employer, the combined hours of work would be 36 hours, which is 10 percent less than the usual weekly hours of work of 40 hours with the STC employer. Since the percentage reduction of combined hours of work is less than the individual's usual hours of work with the STC employer, the STC benefit is reduced to an amount equal to the 10 percent reduction multiplied by the amount of UC payable if the individuals were totally unemployed.

An individual may not be paid a reduced STC benefit that is below the minimum range of reduction in hours permitted in the State STC law.

6. If an individual has concurrent employment with an STC employer and another employer, and is not provided any work for either employer during a week covered by the STC plan, the individual is eligible for the full amount of regular UC to which he or she would otherwise be eligible. Such week is reported as a week of regular UC and not as a week of STC.
7. If an individual has concurrent employment with an STC employer and another employer, and the STC employer does not provide any work during a week covered by a plan but the individual works for the other employer and is determined eligible for regular UC under the provisions of State law governing partial unemployment, then that week is reported as a week of regular UC and not as a week of STC.

## **I. Charging Short-Time Benefits**

Federal law permits states to reduce employers' state unemployment tax rates from a "standard" rate only on the basis of their "experience with respect to unemployment or other factors bearing a direct relation to unemployment risk..." (Section 3303(a), FUTA). As states generally measure employers' experience with unemployment through UC

payments made to their former employees, states charge UC benefits (including STC) to employers' accounts when unemployment is in the direct or indirect control of the employer, or when the unemployment is due to general economic, trade, or other business reasons. Similarly, Federal law provides that employers who opt to reimburse UC benefits (including STC) rather than pay experience-rated state unemployment taxes must reimburse "the amounts of compensation attributable under the State law to such service" (Section 3309(a)(2), FUTA). Therefore, the Department requires states to require reimbursing employers to reimburse the STC costs attributable to the service for these employers.

However, if the Federal Government reimburses the state for STC payments made to an STC employer's workers under the Layoff Prevention Act of 2012, a state may choose not to charge or require reimbursement, for the STC benefits that are reimbursed by the Federal government. If a state chooses to do so, it must so provide in its STC law. This option is fully discussed in UIPL No. 22-12. Because Federal reimbursement is temporary, no model language is provided for this provision.

#### **J. Extended Benefits**

For purpose of the extended benefits program required under the provisions of the Federal-State Extended Unemployment Compensation Act of 1970, any STC received by an individual is considered to be "regular compensation" as the term is used under that Act. Consequently, an individual who has received all of the STC or combined short-time and UC payments that are available in a benefit year would be an "exhaustee," entitled to extended benefits if otherwise eligible. Such extended benefits must be charged or noncharged in the same manner and to the same extent as extended benefits paid to an exhaustee of unemployment compensation and to the same extent as extended benefits are attributed or non-attributed to a reimbursing employer.

#### **K. Optional Provisions.**

Section 3306(v)(10), FUTA, provides that "upon request by the State and approval by the Secretary of Labor, only such other provisions are included in the State law that are determined to be appropriate for purposes of a short-time compensation program."

This is a new provision intended to give states the flexibility to include, upon state request and approval by the Secretary, additional STC requirements if the Secretary determines they are appropriate for an STC program. Many state STC laws currently contain additional requirements for employer or employee participation in the STC program. Some of

these provisions were part of the model legislation previously issued by the Secretary of Labor. Others were added to state STC laws after the guidance providing the previous model language expired.

We have reviewed these provisions. Many of them are common in state STC laws and are not inconsistent with the specific requirements of an STC program under Section 3306(v)(1) through (9), FUTA. Accordingly, the following optional provisions are pre-approved under Section 3306(v)(10), FUTA. States are not required to keep or include these provisions in their state STC laws as a conformity requirement. However, if a state law currently contains these provisions, or a state adds them in a new enactment, they will present no conformity issue.

We are not providing model legislative language for optional provisions. However, we provide below generic examples of state laws containing these provisions. Additionally, a state wishing to add these provisions may request individual technical assistance from the Department of Labor or consult with other states that have such provisions in their STC laws before adding them to any new state STC law.

1. A requirement that, if the affected unit is covered by a collective bargaining agreement, the bargaining representative must agree to the plan.

An affected unit may include employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement, or more than one collective bargaining agreement. Depending on the variety of skills of the workers in an affected bargaining unit, there may be more than one individual craft union agreement or single industrial union type of agreement. A state STC law may require agreement by the collective bargaining representative(s) involved to ensure that both labor and management are satisfied with the plan and to minimize possible problems in connection with implementation of the plan.

Example of a state law containing this provision, as well as the mandatory notice provision:

A.- The employer certifies that it has obtained the approval of any applicable collective bargaining unit representative and has notified all affected employees who are not in a collective bargaining unit of the proposed short-time compensation plan.

2. A requirement that the employer provide assurances to the Director that it will not hire new employees in the affected unit during the term of the plan.

Since an STC plan involves the reduction in hours of members in the affected unit in lieu of layoffs, it is appropriate for an employer to restore the hours of members of the affected unit to the levels that existed before the beginning of the plan before hiring new personnel in the affected unit when business activity increases for that employer.

Example of a state law containing this provision:

A.- The employer certifies that it will not hire additional part-time or full-time employees for the affected work force while the program is in operation.

B.- The employer provides assurances that it will not hire new employees in, or transfer employees to, the affected unit during the effective period of the short-time compensation plan.

3. Limitations on tenure of workers in affected unit in an STC plan.

As specified in the model language, a state may require that an affected unit contain a reasonable minimum number of employees (but not fewer than 2). These limitations on the size of an affected unit are intended to reduce problems of administering numerous plans, each for relatively few workers. Any size limitation should take into consideration the benefits of layoff aversion and must not be so large as to limit effective participation in STC programs by a state's employers or to exclude all but the largest employers in a state.

Additionally, some state STC laws contain a limitation that workers in the affected unit must be regularly employed by the employer and require that each worker in the affected unit previously have worked some specified number of hours or weeks for the employer. This limitation is appropriate because an STC plan is not intended to address seasonal variations in economic activities which are an inherent part of the industry or occupation. Therefore, a state may exclude from participation in an STC plan workers who are seasonal, temporary or intermittent employees.

4. A limitation that the STC plan is being implemented to avoid the layoffs of a certain minimum percentage of workers in the affected unit.

Since STC plans are implemented in lieu of layoffs, it is appropriate for a state to require the employer to specify that implementation of the plan will avert the layoffs of a minimum

percentage of members of the affected unit. Requiring the employer to demonstrate that the plan will avert the layoff of a certain minimum percentage of workers in the affected unit allows the state to make a proper evaluation of the effectiveness of the plan as a true layoff aversion strategy.

Examples of state STC laws containing this provision:

A.- The plan includes a certified statement by the employer that the aggregate reduction in work hours is in lieu of layoffs that would affect at least 10 percent of the employees in the affected unit and that would have resulted in an equivalent reduction in work hours. The plan applies to at least 10 percent of the employees in the affected unit.

B.- The employer's certification that the implementation of a short-time compensation plan is in lieu of layoffs that would affect at least 15 percent of the employees in the affected unit and would result in an equivalent reduction in work hours.

5. A prohibition against STC plan participation by employers who are delinquent in the payment of contributions, penalties or interest.

It is appropriate for a state to limit participation in the STC program to only those employers who are meeting their obligations under State law, and who are not delinquent in the payment of taxes, penalties, or interest to ensure that there is not a negative impact on the state's account in the unemployment trust fund so the Director can properly administer the UC program in the state.

Example of a state STC law containing this provision:

A. - A short-time compensation plan will only be approved for an employer that meets all of the following requirements:

B. - The employer has filed all quarterly reports and other reports required under this act and has paid all obligation assessments, contributions, reimbursements in lieu of contributions, interest, and penalties due through the date of the employer's application.