

Section XX. TRAINING ACCOUNTS / INDUSTRY CREDENTIALS

a. Individual Training Accounts

Individual Training Accounts are one training option available to eligible participants when: (1) a course of choice is not available under an approved class-size contract; and (2) if it is determined by a career coach that they will be unlikely or unable to obtain or retain employment, through career services, which leads to self-sufficiency or to higher wages than previously earned.

Union County will advance to accomplish the 2021 State spending goal of 80% of training funds on occupational training to programs that result in an industry- valued credential or degree by enrolling customers in a progressive series of training that stimulates career advancement while obtaining industry valued credentials.

Union County uses both Class-size RFP's as well as Individual Training Account agreements using courses approved on the NJ Eligible Training Provider List. Since the adoption of WIOA, the Workforce Board has abided by its established eligible training provider process as part of the overall strategy to ensure informed customer choice, performance accountability, and continuous improvement. Criteria are being developed to ensure that programs on the ETPL meet the minimum quality standards and deliver industry-recognized skills and credentials that provide individuals with the opportunity for career progression.

To the extent possible, participants and career coaches utilize information such as skills assessments, labor market conditions/trends, and training providers' performance to determine particular training funding, class size or individual based contracts.

Union County, does, as permitted by WIOA legislation use ITAs for out-of- school youth ages 18-24 under the same provisions for informed choice as described for adult populations.

ITA Use Guidelines

Funding for training is limited to certified WIOA eligible customers who:

- Complete an assessment and an individualized plan that identifies the selected training course;
- Are unable to obtain grant assistance from other sources to pay the costs of training or require assistance beyond available grant resources from other sources, such as Pell Grants in order to complete their training goals;
- Select training programs that are directly linked to an in-demand industry sector or occupation or sectors that have a high potential of sustained demand or growth in the local area.
- Prioritize ITA's in occupational training that will lead to Industry Recognized Credentials

Additional details regarding Provider Selection and Individual Training Provider List for additional detail appear in Section VI.

Progress Update

The Union County Workforce Board has approved an updated ITA policy attached herein. The following summarizes key elements of this policy:

INDIVIDUAL TRAINING ACCOUNTS (ITA) (excerpts)

Union County Policy Directive

Background - This Policy Directive has been established for the allocation of resources for occupational training in the seven (7) sectors identified by the State as the areas that offer the most employment opportunities.

1. Resource Prioritization - 50% of the funding for ITAs would be targeted to three growth sectors that provide increased employment opportunities specific to Union County: Transportation, Logistics, and Distribution (TLD); Retail; and Healthcare. There remains substantial funding for ITAs that are not targeted for specific sectors to fulfill customer choice options.

2. Definitions – included in the policy are important program definitions including: Eligible Training Provider, Priorities of Training Services (one or more courses or classes, or a structured regimen, which lead to: A recognized post-secondary credential, secondary school diploma or its equivalent; Employment or Measurable skill gains toward such a credential or employment), Credentials, Pre-apprenticeship, Program completer, Program exiter.

3. Process – Detailed process steps are presented including: Assessment (the participant must have a completed IEP or ISS); ETP Review (the list of ETPs must be made available to the Local WDB within the state by the State Workforce Agency (SWA), and to the participant by the Local WDB, in order to maximize consumer choice); Selection of a training program, which must include the identification of trainings directly linked to occupations that are in demand in the local area, or in another area to which an adult or dislocated worker is willing to relocate; Limitations on Who Can Receive Training Services; Coordination of Funding; Service providers and training providers, which must coordinate funds available and make funding arrangements with partner agencies so that WIOA ITA funds supplement Pell and other grant sources to pay for the cost of training; and PELL Approval.

3. Cost Limits, Duration, and Availability – Policy covers: Award Limits (A maximum of \$4000 in WIOA funding may be available for the first year of training with a maximum of \$8000 available over a 36-month period to potentially be used for tuition, fees, books, and required supplies.)

4. Additional Requirements – Policy includes: Soft Skills training program prior to or in conjunction with skill training; assessment results (i.e., TABE, WorkKeys, college entrance exams); Maintain a “C” (2.0) grade point average each semester or quarter; Have acceptable attendance as defined by the training provider and Maintain required contact with Workforce WV case manager.

b. Industry-Valued Credentials

As stated earlier, by far, most advantageous to job seekers in today's job market is the attainment of an industry-recognized credential. The American Job Center assessment process will now include a thorough presentation and discussion on the value of credential attainment. Counselors now assist job seekers in their career search by probing deeply into their interests, their skills, their likes and dislikes, their work history and their academic achievements. Transitioning the job seekers mindset from chief criteria: Salary, Hours and Benefits to one that now includes and in fact elevate “INDUSTRY VALUED CREDENTIAL” will require an artful approach.

Staff training is planned around the topic of Job Seeker Assessment and development of Individual Service Strategies for the fall of 2017. Staff will learn how to distinguish types of industry credentials:

- Core
- Advanced
- Specialty
- Skills
- Product/Equipment

Staff will learn how to reference the Listing by Job Title, by Issuing Agency and the type of endorsements. The Union County Workforce Board will then, in turn, begin to monitor the implementation of Industry Credentials Guidance as an effective part of the assessment and career coaching.

Additional comments and strategies regarding industry-valued credentials are fully addressed in Section III.