

**Union County Workforce Development Board Policy Directive
Job Seeker Initial Service Strategy**

1. Purpose

To establish a service delivery policy in which all customers are interviewed, evaluated, or assessed and provided career planning services prior to placing a customer into training.

2. References

a. WIOA Regulation § 681.420 (a) The design framework services of local youth programs must:

(1) Provide for an objective assessment of each youth participant that meets the requirements of WIOA sec. 129(c)(1)(A), and includes a review of the academic and occupational skill levels, as well as the service needs and strengths, of each youth for the purpose of identifying appropriate services and career pathways for participants and informing the individual service strategy;

(2) Develop, and update as needed, an individual service strategy based on the needs of each youth participant that is directly linked to one or more indicators of performance described in WIOA sec. 116(b)(2)(A)(ii), that identifies career pathways that include education and employment goals, that considers career planning and the results of the objective assessment and that prescribes achievement objectives and services for the participant; and

(3) Provide case management of youth participants, including follow-up services. (b) The local plan must describe the design framework for youth programs in the local area, and how the 14 program elements required in § 681.460 are to be made available within that framework

b. Employment and Training Administration US Department of Labor - ADVISORY NO 16-16: TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT GUIDANCE LETTER ONE-STOP OPERATING GUIDANCE FOR THE WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT

c. WIOA SEC. 129. USE OF FUNDS FOR YOUTH WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES.

d. WIOA SEC 134 Comprehensive and specialized assessments of the skills levels and service needs of adults and dislocated workers; Section 134(c)(2) and (c)(3) list the required local employment and training activities.

3. Background

Individualized Career Services Individualized career services must be made available if determined to be appropriate in order for an individual to obtain or retain employment. AJC'S must develop an individual employment plan to identify the employment goals, appropriate achievement objectives, and appropriate combination of services for the participant to achieve his or her employment goals, including the list of, and information regarding eligible training providers;

AJC's need specific guidance on the process for placing a person into training AND steps leading up to the decision, the Assessment, and Pre-enrollment Process.

4. Policy

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The following documents/procedures shall be woven into the job seeker services process. These resources provide guidance and methodically to deliver comprehensive front-end WIOA services to job seekers, including Initial Interview/Evaluation/Assessment and Career Planning

A. INTAKE PROCEDURE

Completed the following for each participant:

1. Participant Name:	Insert the name of the participant.
2. Staff Name:	Insert the name of staff completing the document.
3. Employment/Education Goal:	The WIOA requires that the participant plan include career pathway identifying the education and employment goal of the participant. This area will be unique to each youth participant.
4. Objective Assessment Summary/Challenges/Supportive Service Needs:	<p>The WIOA requires an assessment of the academic levels, skills levels and service needs of each participant and shall include a review of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Basic Skills level – insert grade level from a standardized test. ○ Prior work experience and/or occupational skills and/or employability summarization. ○ Interests and aptitudes (including for non-traditional employment) summarization. ○ Possible challenges to succeed (mark all that apply); list under other if a challenge is not listed. NOTE: all identified challenges must be addressed on this form under Supportive Service or Section 6. ○ Supportive Service Needs – List plan support under this section.
5. Planned Current Indicator(s) of Performance For Participant:	List of all planned performance attainment for the participant.
6. Career Pathway(s), Services and Outcomes:	The Planned Services column is to list the action taken for the career pathway plan. Case Manager must be clear on what the service is, who will offer, name of the worksite, school, etc. At the conclusion of the action list the outcome under that column.

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7. Financial Aid Information:	This section is only for participants enrolled in training. Complete as needed.
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B. ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING

I. INITIAL ASSESSMENT

The initial assessment is part of the overall intake process and includes the initial determination of each individual's employability, aptitudes, abilities, and interests through the interview, testing and counseling. All participants must have an initial assessment completed to evaluate basic skills, experience, and the appropriateness for service and ability to benefit from the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

When the initial assessment indicates that Individualized Career Services are appropriate, an Individual Employment Plan (IEP) is then completed for adults and dislocated workers.

Regarding youth, if an initial assessment indicates that additional services should be provided, an Individual Service Strategy (ISS) will be developed.

II. COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES

Individual Employment Plan or Individual Service Strategy

A complete assessment is an independent, comprehensive evaluation of an individual, designed to identify information vital to the development of a service strategy and to set goals and objectives which culminate in gainful employment.

The IEP/ISS should be revisited on a regular basis and amended, as appropriate, when additional needs are identified, or goals are achieved. Assessment is a holistic, ongoing process and should not be viewed as a one-time event. It should include a full array of options for the participant from which program staff, together with the participant, makes informed decisions and select the appropriate services, which will best enable the participant to seek and retain long-term self-sufficient employment.

1. Assessment means an examination of the capabilities, needs and vocational potential of an applicant or participant.
2. An initial assessment indicates that additional services are appropriate and triggers the completion of an Individual Employment Plan (IEP) or Individual Service Strategy (ISS) and registration in WIOA Title I programs.
3. A comprehensive assessment is completed upon enrollment in the WIOA program. The comprehensive assessment provides specific information for the development of the IEP/ISS.
4. WIOA service providers must use the assessment tools provided when working with

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their participants in the comprehensive assessment process. Through the use of these tools, the participant will create a customized portfolio which will guide their career planning and be accessible to partner

5. program operators such as Adult Basic Education and Vocational Rehabilitation in the event the participant needs to be referred to these partners for services.

Example

If an individual has been successfully participating in a training program and you will assist them in completing the training; or they have prior training and experience in an occupation, but just need an additional certification or help with license renewal then they may only need a Resume Builder tool to assist in their job search.

Developing the Individual Employment Plan or the Individual Service Strategy

The assessment of the participant should be client-centered and provide for a diagnostic evaluation of a participant's employment barriers, taking into account the participant's family situation, work history, education, occupational skills, interests, aptitudes, attitudes towards work, motivation, behavior patterns affecting employment potential, financial resources and needs, supportive service needs, and personal employment information as it relates to the local labor market. The name(s) of the assessor, name(s) of participants being assessed and assessment results need to be identified on the IEP/ISS.

Assessments by Other Programs

Initial assessments such as interest inventories, career assessment and similar assessments (other than basic skills assessments) conducted by other human service programs or educational institutions within the last six months may be used where appropriate, rather than requiring the participant to undergo additional, duplicative assessments, which may disrupt and discourage further participation. However, the service provider should evaluate the information provided and complete updated assessments if needed for effective WIOA program planning and update the ISS/IEP appropriately

III. BASIC SKILLS ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES

All Adult and Dislocated Worker participants, with the exception of those individuals that can provide other acceptable documentations (see exception below), must be assessed for basic skills deficiencies (reading and math) using the Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE) Standardized Test as part of their initial assessment. The TABE is not required for enrollment and should be administered within a reasonable time following enrollment based upon the participant's plan.

A copy of the TABE scoring sheet indicating grade level skill must be maintained in each

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participant file. The results (reading/math) need to be quantifiable through grade equivalency scores or raw score from criterion-referenced assessment tools (TABE) and entered in electronic and customer portfolio. Plans to address basic skills deficiencies for those that tested at or below the eighth grade (8.9) must be documented in the IEP for adults or dislocated workers.

Literacy and numeracy gains are not performance measures for these programs; however poor math and/or reading skills could be a factor in the participant's education and employment goals. Deficiencies should be addressed in the Individual Employment Plan and discussed with the participant to provide them the opportunity to determine how they want to address the deficiencies and explore options for improvement.

Post-testing is not a requirement for adults and dislocated workers. However, if it's determined that the participant should be post-tested this should only occur if the participant has gone through remediation or tutoring to determine whether or not they have raised their basic skills.

Individuals may be post-tested several times as appropriate while they are enrolled in the program. How often depends on a plan developed by the case manager and the participant. Please apply the 30 to 60 days intervals (depending up test scores) between post-testing.

1. Acceptable TABE alternatives must have documentation placed in the participant's file and be documented in case notes.
 - Acceptable Documentation:
 - High school equivalency diploma attained within the last year;
 - Degree or certificate from college, university or technical school;
 - Collateral contacts with school/college which include the name and results of the assessment;
 - Copy of post-secondary grades sufficient to demonstrate the participant's basic skill proficiency; and
 - College Placement Tests taken within the last year
 - Accuplacer may be used.

2. Examples of unacceptable alternatives for the TABE include:
 - High school diploma;
 - Report cards;
 - High school equivalency diploma obtained longer than one year ago;
 - Teacher or school administration statements not citing specific assessments or test results; and
 - Tests that are not standardized.
 - Other types of testing and assessments may be done for each client. Results may be used in the development of the Individual Employment Plan.

C. INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYMENT PLAN (IEP)

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I. Description

An Individual Employment Plan (IEP) is required for Adult and Dislocated Worker participants in WIOA Title IB Individualized Career and Training services. It is both a form and a continual process. The IEP is developed in partnership with the participant. The IEP identifies where the participant is, where the participant wants to be and the appropriate mix and sequence of services and support to reach a realistic employment goal. The development of the IEP and updates or revisions should be based upon the results of the comprehensive assessment process.

Initially, the IEP shall be the basic instrument, which documents:

1. That participants have had an initial assessment;
2. The decisions made regarding the mix and combination of services for the participant, including referrals; and
3. Quarterly reviews to evaluate the progress of the participant in meeting planned objectives.

The IEP form shall include a description of:

1. Short and long-term goal(s) and objectives;
2. Appropriate, measurable achievement objectives to meet those goals;
3. Mix and sequence of services and other resources needed;
4. Organizations and/or individuals who will provide those services or resources; and
5. The twelve-months of supplemental follow-up contact with participants who have exited to unsubsidized employment for performance purposes; and 12 months of follow-up services which may be provided to participants who have entered unsubsidized employment to help them with employment retention, wage gains, and their career progress. (The extent of the follow-up services provided may be based on the availability of funding)

A signed copy of the IEP (signed by program staff and participant) must be provided to the participant, and the original attached to the Individual Employment Plan and maintained in the participant's file.

II. Goals and Objectives

Goals and objectives are the desired short and long-term program goals and outcomes and the steps established between program staff and the participant which, when reached, represent successful completion of that portion of the service plan. For each employment goal, there should be one or more interim objectives. These objectives should be achievable in manageable steps, enabling the client to attain success.

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Not every agency can provide all the services indicated by the comprehensive assessment and noted in the IEP. There is the expectation that if the needed services exist and are accessible in a community the agency will make a reasonable, concerted effort to link participants with those services. However, it is recognized that enrollment in WIOA is neither an entitlement nor legal right to services, nor automatic access to limited resources. Therefore, it is expected that if needed services are not available, it shall be so documented in the IEP, and alternative plans shall be developed.

D. ASSESSMENT REGULATION REFERENCES

WIOA §129(c)(1)(A) & 134(b)(2)(A) 20 CFR §678.420 & §681.420

This policy establishes an assessment process for individuals within the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Program.

During the enrollment process in the applicable program, individuals must receive an assessment. Assessments are a holistic, ongoing process and should not be viewed as a one-time event. They provide valuable information that allows employment specialists to best guide an individual as they strive for their employment goal. The results of assessments must be explained to a job seeker and analyzed to provide guidance in determining action steps and services to be included in their employment plan.

One Stop Centers are required to provide direct linkage to one-stop services provided in the One-Stop system; it is the expectation that Wagner-Peyser employment specialists will provide Active Resource Coordination with other one-stop partners. Appropriate one-stop partners and services for an individual are determined through the assessment process and based on the participant's desire to work with the service agency. Active Resource Coordination is the first step in the development of a participant's Integrated Resource Team.

If the information is identified through the assessment process that impacts a participant's application, these edits should be emailed to the Labor Program Specialist.

INITIAL ASSESSMENT

The initial assessment is completed through interviews to determine appropriate one-stop services and coordinated referrals with partner agencies to assist an individual in achieving their employment goal. The initial assessment is part of the overall intake process and includes the initial determination of the following:

- Basic skills
- Identification of strengths
- Identification of workplace skills
- Career interests
- Work values

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- Identification of prior work history
- Family situation
- Service needs

When an Initial Assessment is completed, staff should enter the Initial Assessment service and a case note describing the assessment results.

OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT

The results from an Objective Assessment assists in the development of a Title I participant's employment plan.

Formal assessment results within the last six months, which the participant may have or a partner agency provides, are acceptable to use in place of formal Objective Assessments.

Youth – An objective assessment must be completed during the youth enrollment process prior to youth becoming a participant.

Adult/DW/ – Objective assessment is identified as an individualized career service. This should be completed within 60 days of eligibility determination.

The Objective Assessment shall include a review of the following.

- Basic skills
- Identification of strengths
- Identification of workplace skills
- Career interests
- Work values
- Identification of prior work history
- Family situation
- Service needs

Encouraged Assessments:

- Digital Literacy
- Financial situation
- Reality check

Job Exploration Counseling

Job Exploration Counseling or Career counseling can include a wide variety of professional activities which help individuals with career-related issues. Career counselors work with youth seeking to explore career options, experienced professionals contemplating a career change, parents who want to return to the world of work after taking time to raise their child, or people seeking employment. Career counseling is also offered in various settings, including in groups and individually, in person or virtually¹.

Discussion or counseling of job exploring options is intended to foster motivation, consideration of opportunities and informed decision-making. Specific to youth, real-world activities ensure that students recognize the relevance of a high school and post-school

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education to their futures, both in college and/or the workplace. Job exploration counseling activities can be done in conjunction with private, for-profit, public or nonprofit businesses in your community and/or through web-based resources².

Job Exploration Counseling may include discussion or information on:

- The student's vocational interest inventory results
- The labor market
- In-demand industries and occupations,
- Non-traditional employment options,
- Administration of vocational interest inventories, and
- Identification of career pathways of interest to the students.

Students may be participating in a number of pre-employment transition services or transition services through VR or Education. Discussion or counseling on the results of some of these activities can help to identify viable career options or solidify careers that a student will want to explore further.

Other Job Exploration Activities, may include:

- [Career Awareness](#)
- [Career Speakers](#)
- [Career Student Organization](#)

Career Awareness

In the Career Awareness phase of career development planning, is to understand how personal work-related values apply to opportunities through the world of work. Developing your career awareness means gaining knowledge of career paths and [job opportunities](#) and the [skills](#) and [qualifications](#) necessary to be successful in these positions.

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I. WHAT IS ASSESSMENT?

Assessment is a process to assist case managers and their customers in identifying strengths, transferable skills, interests, work values, and personal priorities as they relate to employment. Assessment is part of the process leading to self-awareness and relies on the active participation of the customer. It is **NOT** something that a case manager does **TO** the customer, or **FOR** the customer, rather an activity in which the case manager functions as a facilitator; helping the customer analyze data and information that will be used in a goal-setting process.

A case manager assists the customer in collecting and analyzing information to determine the best mix of services necessary to obtain employment. Information areas may include a customer's needs, strengths, support systems, education, job skills, interests and career goals. This information may be gathered informally via customer interviews or observations, or formally via assessment tools.

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) requires case managers to conduct an *employability assessment* and to develop an *individual employment plan* for all customers enrolled in the WIA program. This is part of the larger eligibility process case managers go through when determining how to best serve customers in the WIA program. This guide provides a foundation of the assessment process and guidance on how to develop an employment plan for customers.

II. TYPES OF ASSESSMENT

A. Informal Assessment

Informal assessment is the most common method used by case managers to assess a customer's needs. Informal assessments provide the case manager with information about the customer's current interests, attitudes, aptitudes, and personal beliefs – all of which have a bearing on employability. When coupled with data collected through formal assessments, a customer

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career profile begins to emerge. There are a variety of informal assessment tools and options such as:

Interviewing - Personal interviews, which involve face-to-face interaction between the case manager and customer, can provide in-depth information not easily obtained through other methods. Since personal interviews do not typically follow a predetermined set of questions, different information is often gathered with each interview. Because responses to questions posed in the interview cannot always be recorded while the interview is in progress, care should be taken to note complete responses immediately after the interview is over. The 6-S interview is a helpful case management tool for keeping assessment interviews better structured and directed towards gathering information most pertinent to the goals of the WIA program. The case manager requests information from the customer in six basic areas:

1. **Self** – How does the customer see themselves? How important is work in their life? Does the customer work only for a paycheck or do they identify themselves with their work? What else is important: family, religion, community or leisure activities? How do they feel about change emotionally, practically, intellectually? Do they believe they can navigate change effectively? Do they have self-defeating habits or attitudes? Are they willing to change those habits/attitudes? What else might the case manager want to know about the customer?
2. **Situation** – What caused the customer's current situation? Whom do they hold responsible? What impact did this have on other plans? Is it temporary or permanent? What other stresses did they already have in their lives? Have they dealt with other transitions or problems in their lives? Did they deal successfully with those situations? Can they find some positive aspects to this situation?
3. **Support** – What kinds of help/support systems does the customer have? Family? Friends? Are these support systems providing positive feedback, encouragement? How are other people reacting to this change? Who's in the customer's network to provide information, introductions, leads or other help? What about financial help, Unemployment Insurance, savings, spouse's income, other people? How long will this support last? As the case manager, it is important to be mindful that different cultures may have different support systems.
4. **Strategies** – What has the customer done so far to seek employment? What are their plans? Do they have a long-term plan? Are they currently looking for work? How are they approaching work search? Is there some structure and organization to their work search or are they just applying for "anything"? Do they want more training? Can they explain how that will help? Are they dealing with a problem or exploring an opportunity? How are they handling stress; with exercise or other coping strategies? Have they visualized a positive outcome? Can they describe it?

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5. **Skills** – What transferrable or marketable skills does the customer possess? How do these skills relate to the current job market? Is training necessary for the customer to obtain employment or to find a better job?

6. **Synopsis** – What do the case manager and customer hope will be achieved based upon all that is learned from the other "S's"?

The intent of the **6-S Interview** is not to ask *all* of these questions, but to get an idea of the type of information the case manager can hope to learn about the customer. A strong initial interview will help a case manager determine whether a customer is appropriate for WIA. Many times, a customer will be eligible for the WIA program but will have barriers that may make successful participation difficult. Through the interview process, the case manager can work with the customer and determine if enrollment in WIA is appropriate.

Other types of Informal Assessment:

Observation – What is the customer's demonstrated attitude toward work? Are they able to operate independently? Is the customer motivated and committed to reaching their goals? Does the customer follow through with assignments? Are they punctual for appointments, etc.?

Education/Experience – Information about a customer's past experiences should be examined to evaluate successes and failures, and to identify possible patterns. Information about their education and work experience can provide valuable input about career needs and educational plans.

Assessment and Service Strategy Tools – Optional assessment tools are designed to gather assessment information from a fairly broad audience but may be customized for particular customers, settings or purposes. These informal worksheets are not tests and should be used only as a means to collect data that can be used in the career planning process. These optional worksheets may be viewed in the forms section of this guide.

Service strategy tools (participant-completed worksheets) are designed to support specific WIA program activities and components. As with the assessment tools, these worksheets are optional and provide the participant and the case manager with a means to validate things like occupational choice, labor market realities, and wage rates. These worksheets may also be viewed in the forms section of this guide.

B. Formal Assessment

Case managers may prefer to use formal assessment tools to validate a customer's career choice but they are not always necessary. It will be up to the case manager to decide if these tools will be beneficial to the customer and the case manager.

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Most formal assessment tools fall into one of these categories:

Aptitude and Ability Assessments – These tests attempt to measure a customer’s overall ability, including general aptitude, reading ability, typing speed, or a variety of other skills. Although the Idaho Department of Labor does not administer or utilize formal aptitude and ability tests, Prove-It software found in all of Idaho’s American Job Centers allows for a wide variety of proficiency testing, including typing tests, math skills tests, reading and computer software tests.

Interest Inventories – Standardized interest inventories measure the individual’s preference for particular activities. Those preferences/interests can be linked to occupations or occupational clusters that most closely match their interests. The Idaho Department of Labor utilizes the following interest inventories: Interest Determination, Exploration and Assessment System (IDEAS); Holland’s Self-Directed Search (SDS), O-Net Interest Profiles and O-Net Work Importance Locator.

Personality and Management Style Inventories – These instruments assess the emotional, social, and motivational aspects of an individual. The Idaho Department of Labor does not utilize, administer or endorse assessments of this type. However, WIA providers should be familiar with providers in their local area which may use or administer these types of tests.

If you have questions regarding any inventory you are asked to administer, please contact the assessment specialist in the central office.

III. ASSESSMENT INTERPRETATION

Case managers should become familiar with the types of assessments administered to customers and should have a solid understanding of the results and what they mean. Case managers should also be prepared to explain the assessment results to the customer in a meaningful way, rather than just briefly covering the data or numbers.

A. Delivery of the Results

While explaining the results to a customer, keep the following in mind:

- The goals of the customer - interpret the results in terms that relate to the customer's situation.
- Always keep in mind the reliability, validity, and bias of the assessment.
- It is not necessary to give customers exact scores or detailed technical information. The purpose of the case manager's explanation is to transmit meaningful, useful information to the customer, while keeping the customer's goals in mind.
- Try to use language that will be easily understood and inoffensive to customers.

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- Do not avoid discussing low scores; these can be important indicators of areas within occupations or industries in which the customer may experience difficulty or find hindering to success.
- Lead customers to discuss their level of performance and what it means to them. Many times the case manager will find that the results are not a surprise but merely confirmation of what the customer already knows or suspects. The question, “how do you feel about the results so far,” is a good approach and can be used several times by the case manager during the interpretation.
- Emphasize to the customer that the assessment results are meant to help the customer focus on the career exploration process and should not be used as the only tool for decision making.

B. Follow-Up

A copy of the assessment results and brief notes as to what the customer was told should be kept with the case file.