

Workforce Investment Act
Technical Assistance Guide

**Basic & Occupational Skills
Training**

Basic & Occupational Skills Training
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GUIDE

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I. INTRODUCTION

This Technical Assistance Guide (TAG) provides case managers with the guidelines needed for the coordination of two types of classroom style training available to WIA participants:

1. Basic Skills Training (a WIA **Intensive** service)
2. Occupational Skills Training (a WIA **Training** service)

With the delivery of **any** WIA funded services, an Employment Plan must be developed prior to the delivery of such services. As with all WIA activities, the Employment Plan outlines the strategy developed between the case manager and the participant for:

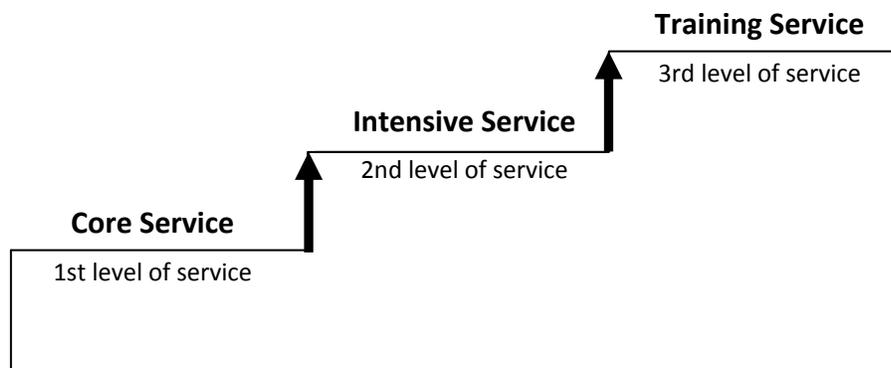
- Attaining self-sufficient employment for Adult/Dislocated Worker participants
- Meeting the education/development needs and/or employment goals for Youth participants

A. Adult & Dislocated Worker Training Services

As discussed in the WIA Introduction TAG, all WIA funded services for Adult and Dislocated Workers are offered in a three-tiered, sequential fashion as represented below;

1. Core Service
2. Intensive Service
3. Training Service

Adult/Dislocated Worker participant access to WIA funded **Occupational Skills Training** can only occur after the participant has accessed the first two tiers of services and is determined by the case manager to be in need of training services to obtain/retain self-sufficient employment. At the point in which **Training** services (such as Occupational Skills Training, On-The-Job Training or others) are needed, a training plan will be implemented.



3-Tiered, Sequential Approach to WIA Service Delivery for Adults & Dislocated Workers

B. Service Delivery Differs For Youth

General guidelines for providing Basic Skills Training and Occupational Skills Training are the same for Youth as they are for Adults/Dislocated Workers. The Youth Employment Plan does not require a multi-tiered implementation approach for Youth to access training services.

The primary goal for Adults/Dislocated workers is self-sufficient employment and training is a secondary consideration only as a necessary means to employment. Youth services place emphasis on education and skill attainments that may be necessary before the Youth participant is fully employable. The primary objective of classroom training for Youth is to prepare them for post-secondary educational opportunities and to link Youth academic and occupational learning, which would ultimately lead to self-sufficient employment. The primary objective for Adults/Dislocated workers is the most efficient route to employment. Further information on service delivery specific to Youth participants can be found in the Introduction TAG.

II. BASIC SKILLS TRAINING OVERVIEW

Basic Skills Training includes classes that will enhance participant employability by upgrading basic education and work readiness skills. Participants may participate in: 1) remedial math or reading skills 2) English as a Second Language (ESL), 3) GED preparation to obtain a high school equivalency diploma, 4) non-academic, prevocational courses to include the development of learning skills, communication skills, or others, such as basic computer skills commonly used in a variety of occupations and industries or 5) work readiness preparation such as interviewing, professional conduct, personal maintenance, or other types of basic skill training that may be necessary to enter either Occupational Skills Training or employment.

When Basic Skills Training needs are identified in the participant's Employment Plan or as the result of pre-admission requirements for Occupational Skills Training, Basic Skills Training should be immediately addressed by the case manager and participants should be referred to programs/organizations best suited for addressing these needs. A variety of Basic Skill remediation opportunities are available to participants at little or no cost to WIA. The case manager should investigate local options which may include Adult Basic Education (ABE) Centers, GED services, Local Literacy Councils, University Enrichment Programs, and community supported programs designed to improve an individual's basic reading and math skills.

Remediation or improvement of basic skill levels or tutoring for, or the attainment of a GED, may be accomplished as a single activity, prior to the beginning of Occupational Skills Training, or concurrently, as determined by participant needs identified in the Employment Plan.

Because Basic Skills improvement or GED attainment alone seldom leads a participant to self-sufficient employment, the case manager must continually review participant progress in anticipation of concurrent or sequential services.

Upon completion of Basic Skills Training, if the participant is not appropriate or available for Occupational Skills Training, or other forms of occupational training activities such as On-the-Job Training, the case manager should assist the participant in gaining unsubsidized employment when the Employment Plan indicates this as the participant's goal.

Adult and Dislocated Worker participants who have been assessed as basic skills deficient (defined below) must receive Basic Skills Training to address the deficiency.

Youth who are out of school and basic skills deficient need to have these deficiencies addressed through the Literacy and Numeracy process. Refer to the Literacy and Numeracy TAG. Eligible applicants not enrolled in WIA should be provided with referrals to meet their basic skill needs.

Unlike Occupational Skills Training, Basic Skills Training classes are categorized as **Intensive** services under WIA therefore organizations which provide Basic Skills Training are not required to be included on the Eligible Training Provider (ETP) List. Case managers should however take care in selecting reputable, proven Basic Skills Training providers such as local Adult Basic Education Centers.

A. Definition of Basic Skills Deficient

The term "basic skills deficient" means an individual who (a) computes or solves problems, reads, writes, or speaks English at or below grade level 8.9 or (b) is unable to compute or solve problems, read, write, or speak English at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family or in society.

III. OCCUPATIONAL SKILLS TRAINING OVERVIEW

Occupational Skills Training (OST) is also conducted in a classroom setting and curriculum is designed to meet the technical needs of the workplace. Occupational Skills Training classes are categorized as **Training** services under WIA and OST providers **are required** to be on the Eligible Training Provider (ETP) List (Section VIII of this TAG).

OST provides WIA participants with the technical skills necessary to perform a specific job or group of jobs. The duration of OST activities varies based on many factors, however the following considerations will be applied to each participant:

- WIA services are intended to provide the participant with the most efficient and cost-effective method for reaching educational/employment goals. With employment being the ultimate goal.

- WIA services and the financial resources associated with WIA are not intended to provide long-term training services such as a four-year, post-secondary education degree.

A. Basic Requirements

- a. Training is approved on the ETP list
- b. Reasonable expectation of self-sufficient employment upon completion of training
- c. The coursework can be completed in a reasonable time period
- d. The coursework is required for entry into a specific occupation
- e. There are no other viable options for services or training that will lead the participant to self-sufficient employment and
- f. The costs of training are feasible within the financial resources of the service provider budget

Participation in an entire baccalaureate or postgraduate academic course is not encouraged due to the financial limitations and structure of the WIA program.

Although WIA training services are designed to help participants reach self-sufficient employment in the most efficient means possible, and not designed to **fully support** long-term, academic programs from **start to finish**, there may be circumstances when assisting a participant with a full academic program is the most appropriate option. Contact a member of the grants management team for assistance with these situations.

B. Individual Training Accounts

Adults, Dislocated Workers and Youth participants who have been determined to be in need of Occupational Skills Training to obtain self-sufficient employment must be provided with an Individual Training Account (WIA-04). Additional information is provided in Section IX.

IV. OST PARTICIPANT CONSIDERATIONS

Participant appropriateness for entry into OST is determined during the assessment process. Along with an assessment of the participant's personal circumstances as related to their ability to complete training, should include:

- Remediation needs and how they will be met
- labor market information and
- supportive service needs

Case managers should inform participants that WIA funds vary from year to year. Participants requiring additional training beyond this period should be made aware that training funds may be continued as allowed by future funding levels.

A WIA-04 authorized to an institution is a commitment for payment. If a participant decides not to attend training the case manager is responsible for the recovery of WIA-04.

V. LABOR MARKET ANALYSIS

The decision to utilize OST as an appropriate training activity is based upon participant needs and goals as identified in the Employment Plan and include an analysis of labor market conditions. Training should be in occupations shown to be in demand in the specific geographic area where employment is desired. As labor market conditions vary widely, the case manager should use informed sources to determine the outlook for a given occupation. Since self-sufficiency is an expected outcome following participation in the OST activity, the participant should be involved in the labor market analysis.

Resources that may be utilized include various occupational surveys and publications, use of the Idaho Career Information System (CIS), Labor Market Information on the Internet, practical data provided by training institutions, discussions with the Regional Labor Economists at the Idaho Department of Labor, and the case manager's knowledge of local employer needs.

Following the determination of labor market conditions, specific employer requirements should be researched to determine if the intended training will provide the participant with the necessary credentials for entry into unsubsidized employment.

VI. ADVANTAGES AND POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS TO OST

A. Advantages

1. Employer recognized and State-approved training courses
2. Application of learned skills is an integral part of most vocational OST
3. Many OST training institutions assist participants in employment seeking activities
4. Skills gained in OST are often easily transferable to a variety of labor market
5. Basic Educational Grants, Pell Grants, and other forms of financial assistance may be available as an adjunct to WIA funds
6. Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants who attend job training courses under Title I are eligible to apply for a training waiver to the work search

requirements of the Employment Security Law when they are enrolled in a WIA training activity.

Note: The Unemployment Insurance (UI) program is designed to serve only as a short-term, economic stabilizer in times of economic downturn.

UI claimants are required to regularly seek work and re-enter employment as quickly as possible. WIA approved training allows the participant to be eligible for a UI waiver for work seeking activities. In such cases communication between case managers and the UI unit will be important.

B. Potential Limitations

1. Participation in OST courses may limit participant's availability for employment. Those participants without additional means of support may have difficulty in completing training.
2. Similar to being limited in their availability for employment, OST courses may require a significant time commitment from the participant. The participant's personal circumstances may require coordination of services that can lead to employment much more quickly than what OST can provide.
3. The labor market can fluctuate quickly and the demand for employment in the chosen occupation may decrease by the time training is complete.

VII. PARTICIPANT SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

Supportive services may be provided to a participant during their participation. The need for supportive services must be documented by the case manager in the Employment Plan or case notes.

The Supportive Service Technical Assistance Guide (TAG) provides a complete description of the types of supportive services which may be provided, supportive service prohibitions, as well as instructions for their provision.

VIII. OST TRAINING PROVIDER SELECTION

A. Eligible Training Provider (ETP) List

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) requires state and local boards to establish criteria and processes for review and approval of training providers before WIA funds can be used to pay for Occupational Skills Training. The case manager must ensure that the OST provider selected by any Adult, Dislocated Worker or Youth participant is on the State ETP list prior to issuing payment to the training provider or reimbursing the participant for any training related payments. If the training provider is not on the list, the provider will need to complete an application

and submit it to the WIA Administrative Entity staff at Idaho Department of Labor. The complete list and additional information can be referenced at:

<http://labor.idaho.gov/dnn/wia/CustomServices/EligibleProviderLists/tabid/538/Default.aspx>

EXEMPTIONS:

Short-term Occupational Skills Training (3 days or less) is exempt from the ETP process.

Programs in Basic Skills Training, basic computer skills and prevocational services are exempt from the ETP list requirements. Job readiness training that focus on career planning, decision-making and daily living skills are exempt from the ETP list requirements. Contact grants management staff for with questions.

B. Additional Guidelines and Options

Following are additional guidelines regarding OST enrollment and training site selection. This list may not be comprehensive; case managers should contact their grants manager when considering OST arrangements which are not within the established policies governing the activity.

1. Out of Area Training Sites

Case managers are strongly encouraged to utilize in-state training institutions as OST sites whenever possible. If training is not available in the immediate geographical area, the case manager and participant may consider training institutions in other areas of the State on the ETP list. If out-of-state training is closer, less costly, or the only available option, such sites may be utilized provided the training provider and coursework are on the ETP list in the state where the training provider is located. If training in another geographical area is the best option, it is important for the case manager and participant to develop a detailed training plan as this may require participant relocation and substantial expense. Case managers should contact their grants manager with questions.

Training outside and associated costs outside the United States are prohibited by WIA regulations.

a. Residential Support

Residential support, a form of supportive services, may be an allowable expense when a participant attends short-term training outside of their normal commuting area. Residential support includes lodging, meals, and miscellaneous expenses which are necessary for the participant to

complete training. Form requirements for residential support and other types of supportive services available to OST participants can be referenced in the Supportive Service-Insurance TAG.

2. Correspondence Courses

The use of correspondence courses is discouraged; experience has shown that participant progress is often hindered by the lack of structure inherent in this type of training. The majority of the curriculum of such courses is processed from out-of-state locations and may not provide the participant with the necessary skill level or certification for entry into unsubsidized employment. Case managers considering this type of training should contact their grants manager for technical assistance.

3. Sectarian Activities

WIA participants may choose to use their ITA (WIA-04) for training in religious activities if all the other WIA program requirements are met. WIA regulations do not allow financial assistance to directly support inherently religious activities. Inherently religious activities include activities such as worship, prayer, religious instruction, proselytizing, or administering communion.

Please contact the grants unit with questions.

4. Customized Training

Customized Training is designed to train participants for specific occupations, generally in a new or expanding business or industry. Customized Training is conducted with a commitment by an employer or group of employers to employ a participant upon successful completion of training. In addition, the employer is required to pay for not less than 50 percent of the cost of training.

Customized Training may not be conducted with an employer who has relocated, if such relocation has resulted in the loss of employment for any employee at the previous location. Relocation includes operations at new sites or expanded facilities that are not located within the same labor market. This restriction remains in effect for a period of 120 days after the commencement of operations in the new or expanded facilities. The Customized Training Pre-Award Review form (WIA/TAA-19-C) located on the WIA MIS identifies complete criteria for assessment of this factor.

NOTE: Customized Training should supplement and not duplicate the State's Workforce Development Training Fund initiative. Contact your grants manager before developing any customized training.

IX. OST PROCESSES AND FORMS

A. Training And Monetary Limits

If a WIA service provider elects to impose local monetary limits for training or training materials, the established limits must be applied consistently for all participants.

B. Pell Grant/Financial Aid Coordination

The Workforce Investment Act requires case managers to coordinate training funds with entities administering alternate sources of funds, including Pell Grants, to avoid duplicate payments. Consequently, participants who attend Pell eligible training are required to apply for Pell funds, as well as any other assistance that does not require repayment. WIA funding for training is limited to participants who are unable to obtain grant assistance from other sources, or who require assistance beyond that available from other sources to pay the costs of training. The WIA Student Financial Aid Transmittal Form (WIA-42) is designed to meet this requirement and provides the case manager with information pertinent to funds which are received from Pell Grants and other financial aid awards. Case managers cannot require participants to access student loans or incur debt.

As applicable the case manager will assist the participant as early as possible during the career guidance process, to establish eligibility for Pell Grants, student loans and other forms of financial aid.

Case managers should record the participant's training-related financial assistance needs from all sources, including Pell Grant funds in the participant's Employment Plan. Documentation must clearly reflect the agreement between the case manager and the participant as to how funds are to be expended to support the participant's needs. For example, documentation may state "The Pell grant will be utilized to pay for books and tuition, and WIA funds will be utilized for transportation costs to and from the training site."

C. The WIA Student Financial Aid Transmittal Form (WIA-42)

The WIA Student Financial Aid Transmittal Form (WIA-42) is initiated by the WIA Case Manager, who completes the basic participant information and forwards the form to the financial aid office of the training institution. Staff of the financial aid office will complete the grant/loan data portion of this form and return it to the Case Manager. When returned, this form should be retained as part of the participant's Employment Plan. Any changes in the course of study that require the participant to apply for additional financial aid must be coordinated with the institution by the Case Manager to ensure that all parties are aware of these changes. Documentation of additional or modified financial aid must be documented by the

case manager in the case notes or by amendment to the Financial Aid Coordination Form.

D. WIA Purchase Agreement-Individual Training Account (WIA-04)

The WIA Purchase Agreement-Individual Training Account WIA-04 form is designed to authorize occupational training payments as well as other services. For form completion instructions, refer to the Supportive Service-Insurance TAG.

The Purchase Agreement may serve as a payment authorization for tuition/fees, or a combination of training and training materials. Completion of the Purchase Agreement should correspond to the training institution's billing cycle policy, i.e., by semester, full payment at the beginning of short-term training, or by session for classes which require session payments.

The case manager will complete Section I of the Purchase Agreement-Individual Training Account, providing a full description of the training and materials that are authorized for payment. This description must be legible and include dates, a description of the participant's training, and provide an itemized list of training and/or training materials as in the following examples:

Example #1

Vocational Office Occupations - Legal Secretary

Tuition & Registration Fees for Fall semester (Aug-Dec) - \$575.00

Books and Supplies required for training - \$290.00

Misc Lab Fees - \$45.00

Individual Training Account Total = \$910.00

The Purchase Agreement (WIA-04), with accompanying instructions, should be forwarded to the training institution. **Immediately following expiration of the refund period, the institution will submit the original and two copies of the Purchase Agreement, with accompanying invoices, to:**

Attn: WIA Payroll
Idaho Department of Labor
317 W. Main Street
Boise, ID 83735

Note: A participant's signature on the Purchase Agreement is not required when it is issued to a training provider as an ITA. However, when the Purchase Agreement is given to the participant for training materials which will be received by the participant directly, normal form completion requirements will apply and vendor/participant signatures are required.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR IDAHO STATE UNIVERSITY (ISU): WIA-04's received by ISU will be returned to the case manager as they are processed by the

institution. Upon receipt, the case manager will forward the authorizations to the WIA Payroll Unit who will maintain the WIA-04's in a separate ISU file. When the refund period has expired, ISU will submit a payment request at which time the 04's will be matched to the payment request.

Other schools with similar structure may elect to use these procedures.

E. OST Breaks, Gaps In Service Or Discontinuation

1. Student Withdrawal

If a participant withdraws or quits class the Case Manager must take immediate steps to ensure that a formal withdrawal and ITA cancellation takes place. If the participant has not formally withdrawn, contact should be made with school officials to initiate administrative withdrawal. The WIA Payroll Unit at Idaho Department of Labor must be notified of the student's withdrawal. Although training institutions are instructed to submit payment requests after all refund periods have expired, the withdrawal notice to WIA Payroll provides an additional measure of safety by ensuring that billings for withdrawing students are not paid without regard to possible refunds.

2. Gap In Service

a. Summer Break

The WIA "break" activity is used for OST participants when enrollment includes a summer break period. Case managers should data enter participants into the "break" activity on the WIA MIS system when classroom activity is suspended for the summer.

b. Emergency Break

The break activity can also be used when unanticipated events occur and the participant is unable to immediately continue participation in the OST activity. Such events may include illness, injury, family crisis, or another significant occurrence which, in the judgment of the participant and case manager, would indicate a break in active participation is required. The case manager must determine whether use of the break activity or exit from WIA, with possible re-enrollment at a later date, is most appropriate.

A participant can remain in a break activity for up to 90 days. If there is an unplanned gap of service greater than 90 days a participant should be exited, except in the following circumstances:

- Delay before the beginning of training; including summer break

- Health/medical condition or providing care for a family member with a health/medical condition
- Temporary move from the area that prevents the individual from participating in services such as National Guard or other related military service

The above exceptions should not last more than 180 days from the date of the most recent service to allow time to address the barriers. However, an additional gap of another 180 days may be initiated in order to resolve the issues that prevent participation. Case managers must document all gaps in service and the reasons including the participant's intent to return to complete program services.

The case manager must take all necessary steps to ensure that necessary support (either provided directly or by referral) is made available to the participant to enable his or her return to the OST activity. In addition, the reason for the break activity entry and all ongoing participant contacts should be documented in the case notes.

The training institution must be immediately notified by the case manager if participant entry into the break activity under these conditions is indicated. The case manager will assist the participant in completing forms or letters required for temporary withdrawal from the training institution as necessary.

X. PARTICIPANT INSURANCE

All participants attending Basic Skills Training or Occupational Skills Training are insured through a policy that covers injuries or illness that are directly related to the participant's involvement in the activity. Additional student health insurance is normally not an allowable cost, unless it is uniformly required of all students at an institution, or is considered necessary in hazardous occupational training, such as the nursing profession, whose constant exposure to disease would be considered hazardous.

Form requirements for participant insurance available in the Supportive Service - Insurance TAG.