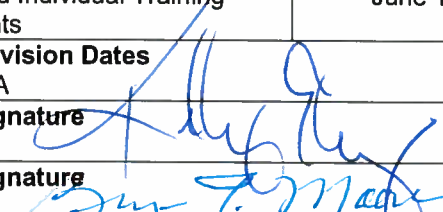



LOUISIANA WORKFORCE COMMISSION

Policy Number OWD 2-19	Policy Name Demand Occupations and Individual Training Accounts	Original Effective Date June 1, 2013
Issuing Department Office of Workforce Development	Revision Dates N/A	
Owner Kelly Ebey, Deputy Director	Signature 	
Appointing Authority Bryan Moore, Director	Signature 	

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PHILOSOPHY

The Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) is committed to "Putting People to Work" by continuously improving Louisiana's demand driven system to respond quickly to immediate and long term needs of employers through connecting job seekers to employers seeking candidates with the skills and/or credentials in demand occupations.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to define the different levels of demand occupations and provide guidance to Local Workforce Investment Boards (LWIBs) in designing or refining Individual Training Account (ITA) policies and procedures for adult and dislocated workers under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA).

REFERENCES/CITATIONS

Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 663.400-663.430

Office of Workforce Development (OWD) 2- 13 WIA Certification Process for Eligible Training Program/Providers (Subsequent Eligibility) Policy

APPLICABILITY

This applies to LWIBs and Business and Career Solutions Centers (BCSCs).

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DEFINITIONS

In defining occupations in demand for the purposes of administering WIA training dollar funds for each Local Workforce Investment Boards (LWIBs) to assess which occupations have the highest impact on their local economies a new balanced approach has been approved by the State's Workforce Investment Council (WIC).

The new methodology relies on a weighted measure of rating each occupation based on long and short-term annual demand, long and short-term percent growth, total prior year recorded openings, and median wages for each occupation as defined under the Louisiana Star Occupations (Star Jobs) methodology and derived from the Regional Labor Market Areas (RLMA).

Individual Training Account

Local Boards, in partnership with the State, identify training providers and programs whose performances qualify them to receive WIA funds to train adults, dislocated workers and youths.

Level 1: Top Demand

Occupations that are rated four and five star occupations in each of the RLMA shall automatically be considered a demand occupation for WIA purposes.

Level 2: Demand

Occupations that appear in the Louisiana Workforce Commission's (LWC) occupational projections and are assigned a three star rating based on total annual demand.

Level 3: Locally Determined

Locally determined are occupations in demand as determined by the Local Workforce Investment Board (WIB). Supporting documentation from reputable sources must be included. These occupations should be reviewed on an annual basis to determine continued inclusion on the list.

a) Job Orders:

Bona fide job listings through the Louisiana Workforce Commission, local newspaper, or other reputable Internet sites (i.e. National Labor Exchange (NLX), Monster.com, etc.). The number of non-duplicated regional listings should be no less than **five** openings over a 4-month period which translates to ***15** in a 12-month period.

b) Employer Surveys:

Employer surveys that try to determine current and projected occupational shortages can be used. Local WIBs, chambers of commerce, economic development entities, business and trade organizations, LWC, and/or academic institutions can conduct surveys. Results should support an annual demand of ***15** or more, and a median wage rate that is above 40 percent of the region.

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c) Targeted Industries:

Identified occupations within "targeted industries" are to be locally determined by the local WIBs, through coordination with chambers of commerce, economic development entities, and business and trade organizations. Such targeted industries may be identified in economic development plans whose objectives are to attract or expand specific industry sectors within the region. It should be demonstrated that occupations within these industries would result in an annual demand of ***15** or more, and a median wage rate above the 40th percentile for the region.

d) Other:

Identified occupations that are not justified in 3 a, b, & c. Inclusion of these occupations to the RLMA demand list **must** be substantiated with documentation which is subject to review by the Louisiana Workforce Commission.

Note: Level 1 and level 2 demand occupations are only derived at the Regional Labor Market Area (RLMA). In order for an occupation to be added to the demand list under level 3, an annual demand of ***15** will be determined at the RLMA, **but may** include area(s) outside the RLMA. For example, RLMA 3, which is comprised of three parishes, may be limited in the ability to derive a demand of 15 for an occupation. Therefore, it would be acceptable to include area(s) within typical commuting patterns to the RLMA in determining the demand for an occupation. Note that if the WIA participant declares an intent to relocate, the listing from the region to which she/he plans to relocate should be considered. Additionally prior year job openings and median wages calculated for such occupations should be determined to be considered under level 3 demand.

** The total annual demand figures were rounded in the occupational forecasting process; hence, any value 15 - 24 would round to 20. Using 20 as the threshold would be in accordance with the criteria established in the process of developing the top demand occupations, previously adopted by the OFC.*

POLICY

Training Services provided through ITAs are limited to demand occupations and may be made available only through providers on the WIB approved Eligible Training Providers List (ETPL). We recommend that local policies and procedures address the following:

The approach case managers and counselors will use to guide participants in selecting an eligible provider of services;

How demand occupations will be determined and exceptions, if any, to providing training services that are not in demand occupations;

Procedures to follow to ensure that training will not exceed labor market demand;

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What part will program costs play in selection of training providers (i.e. all cost factors, including participant support must be considered);

Restrictions, if any, in approving ITAs to new training providers who lack performance data; and

Restrictions on ITA training providers with low local performances that remains on the ETPL.

All participants issued an ITA must be eligible and have been recommended for an ITA as a result of an assessment and the Individual Employment Plan (IEP) (20 CFR 663.310). We recommend that local policies and procedures address the following:

Required competency level for participants requesting an ITA (i.e. GED, high school diploma, or reading and math grade levels) based on occupations;

How participants demonstrate commitment to completing the selected training program; knowledge of the targeted demand occupation in the local area or proposed area of employment; knowledge of the chosen career's job requirements and working conditions; having met training providers' entrance requirements; and that the selected training program is consistent with the participant's IEP (i.e. completion of ITA orientation, check list for submission of required documents, participant's statement);

Under what circumstances, if any, are participants already enrolled in schools eligible for an ITA;

Timelines for participants to access (utilize) their ITA and exceptions that may be permitted due to unexpected circumstances (e.g., program scheduling constraints, budgeting); and

Procedures to ensure that the ITA voucher may be redeemed only for training programs agreed upon by the participant and counselor.

When other financial resources are unavailable, WIA funds can be used to pay for training costs [20 CFR 663.320(a)]. WIA funds are dollars of last resort, and, as such, are to be used only to supplement, not supplant, other training assistance resources. We recommend that local procedures be established to:

Determine and document participant's financial needs and the proper mix of WIA and other monies available;

Coordinate available federal, state, and local resources to meet the training and education-related costs of services; and

Ensure that ITA funds are spent only on allowable activities.

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The state has not set limits on the amount and duration of ITAs. The state has left the decision about ITA limitations to the Local Workforce Investment Boards. Limits to ITAs may be established in different ways [20 CFR 663.420(b)]. Limitations should not be implemented in a manner that limits participant's choice in selection of an eligible training provider [20 CFR 663.420(c)]. We recommend that local policies be established to:

Set limits for individual participants based on the needs identified in their employment plans;

Set limits that are applicable to all ITAs;

Establish a range of amounts (e.g. \$900 - \$4,000) and/or a maximum amount (e.g., \$5,000 per year) and establish how allowed amounts are determined [i.e. actual training costs, return on the dollar (meaning a higher costing ITA for jobs leading to higher pay/national credentials)];

Provide for exceptions to limitations in individual cases.

It is recommended that local policies include procedures for monitoring and evaluating participants' progress. Further, it is recommended that local policies address:

How satisfactory progress is determined;

What interventions will occur to ensure successful programs for participants at risk of being placed on "academic probation," and;

Frequency and manner of monitoring to be conducted (i.e. random sample, only if problems surface, personal contact on-site quarterly, and telephone contact after class time).

Prior to beginning of training and issuing an ITA, the program operator should enter into an Agreement with the training provider. An individual or blanket Agreement could be entered with each training provider. This Agreement should include, but is not limited to:

Training program(s) approved under this Agreement;

The method of payment [i.e. cash reimbursement, lines of credit, pre-funded account with eligible institutions, electronic transfer of funds through financial institutions, voucher, or other appropriate methods, etc. (20 CFR 663.410)];

Payment schedule (e.g., invoiced monthly, quarterly, as ITAs are redeemed) and required documentation;

Procedures for participant referral;

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Performance expected and timeline for performance and any conditional approvals and suspension for failing to substantially comply with the quality of services;

Policy and procedures for handling changes to provider's published curriculum, course length, course structure, etc.;

Policy and procedures regarding how increases in published training costs will be handled;

Assurances that training costs are based on established catalog prices that is commercially available to non-WIA participants;

Monitoring accessibility;

Procedures/requirements for reporting participant's progress or evaluations, and;

Compliance with Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and American Disability Act (ADA), and adherence to applicable laws and regulations.

The local policy should include an appeal process for participants denied ITAs. This process should detail each step to be taken; timelines for written appeal(s) and responses; and steps participants should take if they feel that they were denied an ITA for any reason other than discrimination. Issues involving discrimination should be handled in accordance with 20 CFR, Part 667, Subpart F – Grievance Procedures, Complaints, and State Appeals Processes.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Deputy Director

The Deputy Director is responsible for appropriate communication and guidance of this policy to the LWIB Directors.

LWIBs

To establish local policies that compliment and support this state policy.

LWIB Directors

The LWIB Director's responsibility is to review the policy and provide appropriate guidance and policy to the Business and Career Solutions Centers (B&CSCs).

Local Area Coordinator (LAC)

The LAC's responsibility is to implement and provide guidance to the staff at the B&CSC.

B&CSC Staff

The responsibility of the B&CSC staff is to review and understand the policy and any guidance provided by the LAC, and to provide services in accordance with this policy as well as local policies governing the same.

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EXCEPTIONS

N/A.

VIOLATIONS

Failure to follow this policy may result in disallowed costs and other audit findings for the LWIAs.

CONTACTS

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ATTACHMENTS

N/A