

WIA SCHOLARSHIP POLICY

Background

The Central Ohio Workforce Investment Corporation (COWIC) offers a limited number of scholarships each year to assist eligible persons who are not self sufficient or lack the skills to be employed. The scholarship should help ensure the availability of a skilled workforce, particularly for jobs or occupations with high demand.

The COWIB will annually review the list of occupations with high demand to determine whether adjustments should be made.

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) stipulates that with limited exceptions, training services provided to adults and dislocated workers shall be delivered using an Individual Training Account (ITA). An ITA is an account established by the COWIC on behalf of an eligible client to procure training services. The ITA will be the vehicle that provides training assistance, along with any other funding sources administered by the COWIC. WIA training services must be provided by training institutions selected from the State-approved list of eligible training providers, per WIA Section 122 and 29 CFR 663.500, and must be provided through the COWIB One Stop delivery system.

Training accounts funded through other than WIA sources will comply with the requirements of those funding sources.

1. Individual Training Accounts (ITAs)

ITAs may be issued to eligible adults and dislocated workers who have been assessed and determined to have specific skill-related barriers to employment. Except for on-the-job training and customized training, ITAs will be used by clients to obtain occupational skills training leading to a degree, certification, or employer recognized skill certification or skill attainment under WIA and other funding sources.

The skills training, except as delineated below, must be for local area occupations in high or moderate demand occupations or in occupations in demand in another area in which the adults or dislocated workers receiving such services are willing to relocate. They also must be academically appropriate for the individual client.

Training will only be provided by providers who are on the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) approved list of eligible training providers. The ODJFS list includes the providers who are approved by the Central Ohio Workforce Investment Board to deliver training, and who have submitted description of their programs, performance and cost information. The eligible training provider list can be obtained via the ODJFS database of eligible training providers through the ODJFS website address: <http://www.ohiomeansjobs.com/etpo>

ITAs may be granted for training in occupations that are not on the List of Demand Occupations. However, for an exception, a written request (letter or email) must be submitted to the COWIC President or designee by the Career Advisor's supervisor. The request should include the following information:

- The name of the person for which the exception is being requested,
- Supplementary data substantiating why the training should be allowed,
- The length of time the training will take,
- The cost of the training, and
- The institution to provide the training.

The COWIC President or designee will make a determination and provide a written response to the request.

2. Eligibility Criteria

a. Clients must be 18 years of age, a dislocated worker, or fall within the ODJFS's program waiver for youth eligibility for Individual Training Account participation (older (age 16-18) and out of school youth-see section 3- Youth). Adult and Youth clients must be unemployed or employed but have a family income of less than 250% of the Federal Poverty Level or do not meet the COWIB definition of self sufficiency.

a. Prior to the issuance of an ITA, clients must receive a continuum of services in at least one of the core and one of the intensive service categories. After receiving at least one core and one intensive service, a client may be considered for referral for training services. There is no time requirement for movement between core, staff assisted core and intensive services and will be based upon the client's individual assessment and needs.

b. Clients who have been assessed and identified with specific barriers to employment may be issued ITAs only after their specific barriers have been addressed. Supportive services may be appropriate to overcome identified barriers.

c. A determination must have been made by the Career Advisor that the client needs training and must make an assessment that the desired training is appropriate for the client in accordance with the ODJFS and COWIC suitability policy. This requires a review of the following areas:

1. be unable or be judged as unable to obtain or retain employment through core and intensive services;
2. be determined to be in need of training after an individual interview, evaluation, or assessment and development of comprehensive IEP;
3. have the skills and qualifications to successfully participate in the selected program of training services (additional occupational assessments may be required);
4. select a program of training services that are directly linked to the employment opportunities in the local area involved or in other areas in which the individual is willing to relocate; and
5. potential for a client to obtain employment at a wage that allows the client to be self-sufficient without training vs. with training.

d. The participant must be unable to obtain other grant assistance for such services, including Federal Pell Grants established under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965; or require assistance beyond the assistance made available under other grant assistance programs, including Federal Pell Grants. A client may enroll in WIA funded training while his/her application for a PELL grant is pending as long as the Career Advisor has made arrangements with the training provider and client regarding the allocation of the PELL Grant if awarded. The training provider must reimburse the WIA funds that were used to underwrite the tuition that the PELL Grant covers. Reimbursement is not required from the portion of the PELL Grant assistance disbursed to the WIA client for education related expenses.

e. Compliance with the ODJFS and COWIC suitability policies.

f. Both Franklin County and Non-Franklin County residents may be considered for a scholarship. However, Non-Franklin County residents will

be restricted to the lower of the Franklin County scholarship amounts or the amounts available in their county of residence. Workers residing outside Franklin County but dislocated from a Franklin County business are eligible to receive Franklin County resident benefits.

3. Youth

In July 2005, the US Department of Labor granted Ohio a waiver allowing the use of ITA's for youth participants who are ages 16-21, and/or who are out-of-school but not enrolled in the adult and/or dislocated worker program. Youth who are 14-15 may not receive an ITA, even if they are out-of-school. Out-of-school youth are eligible youth who are school dropouts, or who have received a secondary school diploma or its equivalent but are basic skills deficient, unemployed, or underemployed. An ITA must be part of a youth's individual service strategy. Eligibility for youth shall continue for the period granted under the USDOL waiver to ODJFS.

Youth between the ages the ages of 18 and 23 applying for an ITA must be screened for dependency status, in accordance with ODJFS and COWIB policy. Dependency status will be determined by completing the Determination of WIA Dependent Status Checklist, Attachment A of WIAPL 08-11 in accordance with the COWIC suitability policy. Once the individual's family status is determined, then the family's income is considered to determine whether family meets the self-sufficiency standard. The family's income must be below 250% of the federal poverty level, adjusted for family size, to be eligible for an ITA. Handicapped individuals may be considered a family of one in terms of income qualification.

4. Available Assistance

The amount of the scholarship will be based on the reasonable cost of the training, the amount of outside financial assistance available, and the contribution made by the applicant. In no instance will the amount of the scholarship exceed \$15,000. Scholarships may be used to pay for tuition, books, supplies, fees, personnel protective equipment, and tools. Scholarships will not be used for advanced degrees.

Scholarships will be for a maximum of three years or the length of the recognized/approved apprenticeship program for which the ITA is issued, whichever is longer and clients will have demonstrated that the required coursework can be completed in three years or the length of the approved

apprenticeship program. Unless extraordinary circumstances are demonstrated (e.g., illness or family hardship, internships, work schedule conflicts not anticipated at application), scholarships will expire at the end of three years or the length of the approved apprenticeship program and may not be renewed, unless otherwise authorized by the COWIC president or his/her designee.

5. Client Choice

The Career Advisor will help guide the client to training programs that meet local labor market demands and provide performance statistics and client satisfaction data regarding eligible training providers. The client, in consultation with the Career Advisor, will use this information to make an informed decision as to which training provider can best meet his/her needs. The customer retains the choice to access training for COWIB approved demand occupations from any ITA-eligible training provider on the statewide eligible training provider list.

6. Supportive Services

Eligible applicants who are participating in Core, Intensive, or Training Services may receive payments of up to \$2,000 per program year for Supportive Services such as credentials testing, uniforms, clothing, public transportation costs or reimbursement for personal automobile mileage, or other allowable expense, **if they do not qualify** for these services through any other program/funding source.

7. COWIC Staff Responsibilities

COWIC staff will determine eligibility and suitability for an ITA, provide guidance on selection of appropriate training and training provider, work with the ITA client to complete the training agreement, monitor attendance, obtain progress reports and evidence of training completion, process and track training vouchers, work to facilitate placement, and conduct the appropriate follow up.

Scholarship payments will be reviewed each term. For continuation of the scholarship, individuals must maintain satisfactory progress. Attendance at the training must be meeting the agreed upon training plan and at a minimum reflect the requirements of the training provider. Changes to the training plan must be approved by COWIC staff.

8. Exceptions To ITA Policy

Contracts for services may be used instead of ITAs only when one of the following three exceptions applies: [WIA Section 134 (d) (4) (G) (ii)]

1. When the services provided are on-the-job training (OJT) or customized Training;
2. When the COWIB determines that there are an insufficient number of eligible providers in the local area;
3. When the COWIB determines that there is a training services program of demonstrated effectiveness offered in the area by a community-based organization (CBO) or another private organization to serve special client populations that face multiple barriers to employment. Special populations that face multiple barriers to employment are populations of low-income individual that are included in one or more of the categories noted below:
 - Individuals with substantial language or cultural barriers;
 - Ex-offenders;
 - Homeless individuals; and
 - Other hard-to-serve populations.

9. Appeals

Each applicant for an individual training account must be advised by their respective Career Advisor that they have the right to appeal a decision to deny training, pursuant to the COWIB's Nondiscrimination and EEO Complaint Procedures.