OCCUPATIONAL SKILLS TRAINING

Occupational Skills Training (OST) is an organized program of study providing specific vocational skills leading to proficiency in performing actual tasks and technical functions required by certain occupational fields at entry, intermediate, or advanced levels. This policy applies to WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth, and Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) participants.

OST must be made available to WIOA Title I Youth as one of the 14 youth service elements. It is arranged by DLR in coordination with an approved training provider on the South Dakota Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL).

An Individual Training Account (ITA) agreement is developed for each individual receiving the OST service.

INDIVIDUAL ELIGIBILITY

A WIOA Title I individual must be eligible to receive training services. Individuals must be enrolled as a full-time student (exception for TAA), as considered by the training provider. Use the OST Request (Form 7) to review requirements and expectations of an OST. Eligibility includes an interview, assessment and career plan by a One-Stop Partner which determines:

1. The individual meets eligibility as a WIOA Title I Youth, Dislocated Worker, TAA, or is an Adult in one of the DLR target populations.

2. The individual has the skills and qualifications for the individual successfully in training services, Multiple assessments may be given to prove ability to pass college level course work. **Example:** WorkKeys® assessment the individual scored low, however when given the Accuplacer their score did not require remedial. This includes sufficient reading and math skill level to indicate success in the program of training services as determined by one of the following:
   - WorkKeys® Assessment scores indicate success based on the ACT job profile data base for the occupation. **Example:** Welding requires a level 3, so the individual would need to score a level 3 on WorkKeys® to indicate that they would be ready for this level of training.
   - Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) scores indicate success.
   - Accuplacer scores required for the program of study indicate success (no remedial classes).
   - ACT scores.

3. Labor Market Information in the local or regional area support direct linkage to employment with attainment of the credential or the individual is willing to commute or relocate to areas with such employment.

4. The individual is provided an acceptance letter to the program of training service from the training provider.

5. The individual has completed Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA) and has provided their financial aid letter.

6. The individual has completed a Monthly Income and Expense Record (Form 8) budget indicating they have sufficient income to cover the total cost of training, which includes tuition, required fees, books and living costs.
   - An individual may select a program of training services beyond the maximum funding amount allowed with an ITA when other sources of funding are available to supplement the ITA. Examples of other sources are not limited to but may include: TAA, Pell Grants, scholarships, loans, severance pay and other sources. The individual’s budget for paying for the full amount of the training must be documented in the individual’s case notes.
   - Individuals are responsible for full payment of tuition, fees and other costs not specifically approved and provided under Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I.
   - Individuals in default of previous student loans may be considered for DLR assistance with verification of an agreed upon re-payment plan with the financial institution for the defaulted amount.
7. The program of training services the individual selected is on the ETPL. Programs are not required to be on the ETPL.

**Other Eligibility Scenarios**

Individuals working with DLR but have not been determined eligible for training by the training start date may be considered for OST tuition assistance once eligibility has been determined.

Individuals who are enrolled into WIOA Title I prior to the beginning of their training program but are denied due to lack of WIOA Title I funding may still be considered for second semester OST tuition assistance as long as they have passed their first semester course work at a 2.0 or higher.

Individuals who may have just started a program of training and those who may have completed one or more semesters/quarters and are now seeking DLR assistance should not be considered for WIOA funded OST. Exception is given to individuals who have suddenly become dislocated from their employment. Other considerations are based on an individual’s circumstances, such as individuals who are on public assistance or individual’s whose financial situation has suddenly changed and may be approved by DLR job service office staff. Special considerations are documented in case notes.

Exceptions to full-time student status will be approved by a Labor Program Specialist. Consideration will be based on individual circumstances such as class offerings, progress to date, completion of the approved program within two years, participant’s abilities, etc. Special considerations are documented in case notes. Individuals who were previously enrolled in WIOA Title I, received OST, went to work and are now seeking additional training assistance, may be considered for training. However, eligibility must be met and additional training must follow all areas of this policy. Additional training must be directly related to the individual securing better paying jobs and/or career development.

Individuals who have left the training program of their own accord or as a result of academic probation or suspension may be considered for training assistance. Eligibility must be met and this training must follow all areas of this policy. Reasons for consideration may include medical issues, family emergencies, etc. Special determinations will be established in the individual’s case notes.

**PROGRAMS**

Programs of training services for OST must be on the ETPL with the exception of TAA*. DLR may consider programs of training services in other states if a reciprocity agreement is in place with South Dakota. Under special circumstances approval may be granted with permission from the Labor Program Specialist.

When selecting a program of training services, review career pathways and the ETPL with the individual, including a program description, performance outcomes of the program, and cost information with the individual. An individual should be fully aware of Labor Market Information related to employment in their field of study. This includes wages, employment projections, openings in the area they live, etc...

**Registered Apprenticeships**

OST agreements may be entered into with registered apprenticeship program sponsors or participating employers in registered apprenticeship programs for the classroom portion of the registered apprenticeship program as in accordance to the requirements of this policy.

**TRAINING PROGRAM LENGTH**

Tuition assistance is only available for individuals expected to earn a credential, or more than one credential, within two years of starting a program of study. If an individual must go above and beyond the two years, exceptions may be considered. For exception consideration, contact the appropriate Labor Program Specialist if the individual:

1. Had a disability which required part-time attendance
2. Had to re-take a class (without WIOA Title I tuition assistance).

3. Had unexpected changes in their life. Changes are not limited to but may include family emergencies, medical situations, or an income change.

4. Cannot completed the training with the current schedule of class offerings.

5. Needs pre-requisite courses to extend the program of study (i.e. CNA).

If an exception is made, a case note will be included in the individual’s SDWORKS file by the Labor Program Specialist outlining the reason and the length of the extension.

FUNDING

The maximum funding allowed for OST is $8,000 (Adult and Dislocated Worker) per training program as approved by the Workforce Development Council. Youth maximum funding allowed is $10,400 per program. This maximum funding total includes tuition and required fees. Books and supplies will be paid for with WIOA Title I funds under Support Services (see Policy 5.34). However, the amount to be funded for each individual is on an individual basis and determined by DLR staff.

Limitations of ITA Funding

WIOA Title I funds will not be used for pre-requisite or remedial courses, (less than 100 level courses). In situations where such courses are recommended by the training provider, a remediation schedule should be established between the individual and the Adult Education and Literacy partners to improve an individual’s scores. Once an individual’s basic skills indicate success for their identified program of study, WIOA Title I funding may begin.

WIOA Title I funds will not be used for retaken classes without prior approval from the appropriate Labor Program Specialist in the Central Office. In making this determination, the Labor Program Specialist will take into account, an individual’s situation such as medical situation, family emergencies, etc. Special considerations will be established in the individual’s case notes.

Non-WIOA

Workforce Training may take credit for non-WIOA funded OST. This would be appropriate to do if the program and individual would otherwise be approved by the Workforce Training program. Provider is on the ETPL, justification is met, individual is eligible, etc.) Examples of this may be another member of the Integrated Resource Team is providing the funding or the individual is receiving a Build Dakota scholarship.

DETERMINING UNMET NEED

Total cost of WIOA training can include tuition, required fees and living costs, and must be provided by the training provider or book store on an itemized invoice prior to releasing funds. Other funding such as Federal Pell Grants (information provided by the student), scholarships, Vocational Rehabilitation, etc. are then subtracted from this total cost of training to determine an individual’s unmet need. Loans are not to be included in this determination. WIOA financial assistance may not exceed the maximum funding total or the individual’s unmet tuition or fees.

Prior to starting the training, request funding totals from the training provider by emailing a completed Cost Estimate Worksheet (Form 21) to the training provider to determine the unmet need. When an individual is enrolled in more than one partner program where training funds are available, the individual’s Integrated Resource Team (IRT) should establish a method to blend and braid resources to provide the most benefit to the individual. WIOA Title I funds may be used to assist an individual in training costs above and beyond tuition and fees, including books, housing, dependent care, transportation. These associated costs are paid for through Support Services (see Policy 5.34).
**DOCUMENTATION**

Individual eligibility related to the program must be justified in a SDWORKS case note. This justification note compiles the objective information in items 1-7 under “Individual Eligibility” above, and includes an analysis and recommendations from the Employment Specialist.

An OST may begin after the following items have been discussed with the participant and documented in SDWORKS:

- The individual would benefit from the training and cannot find suitable employment with current skills or through intensive level services if an WIOA Title I Adult or Dislocated Worker and TAA.
- Interest or aptitude assessments concur training program is appropriate for the participant.
- The current level of basic skills are appropriate and the participant is qualified to undertake and complete the requested training.
- Labor Market Information supports the availability of employment opportunities available upon completion.
- Completed Cost Estimate Worksheet (Form 21A) and signed by all parties.
- Occupational Skills Training Responsibilities (Form 21B) is reviewed with the participant.
- Conditions and Assurances (Form 10A) signed by the participant (all providers have signed this form and agreed to terms as part of the ETPL process, so only the participant needs to sign).
- Monthly Income and Expense Record (Form 8) has been completed for training period.
- Acceptance letter from training provider for approved program.
- Receipt of a financial aid letter.

Once the amount is awarded, the Employment Specialist will send the OST Award Letter (Resource 11) by mail or email to the participant and the Training Provider. Include a copy of the Occupational Skills Training Responsibilities (Form 21B).

Ensure all required documentation is complete, legible, and uploaded to the Obligation Voucher in SDWORKS. In the comment box on the Obligation Voucher, include a summary and the date of the justification note. A job service office manager will review and approve the voucher prior to the start date of training. This ensures the office budget has the funds to cover the WIOA Title I commitment for the training.

Once the job service office receives an itemized invoice or OST Billing Statement (Form 23) identifying the tuition cost and fees from the training provider and the individual’s class schedule, these items are submitted with the Payment Voucher.

The approving manager is responsible for ensuring all documentation is uploaded, correct, and legible before authorizing Obligation and Payment vouchers

**MONITORING**

Monitors must be completed for any type of training that is beyond 30 days. Monitoring of progress must be done on a monthly basis using the OST Training Monitor (Form 22) and receipt of grades and attendance at midterm and end of semester or quarter. Upload copies of grades and/or attendance into the SDWORKS document section along with the completed Monitor. If appropriate, include a measurable skills gain according to the Credentials Policy 6.4.

To ensure the program of training is meeting the needs of the participant. An IRT should take place each semester or once per short-term training. The initial monitor should be an Integrated Resource Team (IRT) with the Employment Specialist, training provider and participant in person or by phone with all parties in attendance. Monitors must then be conducted monthly throughout the training period. After the initial monitor, monthly monitors can take place by phone, email or in person. The purpose is to evaluate the progress to date and to identify issues of concern to ensure a successful training.
If any problems or deficiencies are identified during a Monitor, the Employment Specialists should attend a face-to-face IRT meeting with training provider and participant to consider additional services to assist the participant. Such services may include Support Services, tutoring, etc.

All correspondence and determinations must be documented in SDWORKS.

**PAYMENT**

Individual Training Accounts are established on behalf of individual with a training provider for payment of a program of training service. ITAs are paid per semester, quarter or once for a short-term training. Fiscal payments are made based on appropriate documentation with correlation to the unmet need as outlined by the training provider.

**MODIFICATION**

Modification for OSTs are allowed for unmet need, change in costs, changes in participant’s financial situation, etc... A Labor Program Specialist will determine if other reasons for modification are appropriate.

**EMPLOYMENT SPECIALIST’S RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE PARTICIPANT**

- Determine the training eligibility of the individual and assist in the development of an employment plan.
- Provision of information on in-demand industry sectors and occupations.
- Information relating to local occupations in demand and the earnings, skill requirements, and opportunities for advancement for such jobs.
- Provision of information on nontraditional employment. Refer to Nontraditional Employment Policy 6.5.
- Provision of information relating to the availability of support services.
- Assistance in establishing eligibility for programs of financial aid assistance for training and education programs.
- Assist the individual in receiving appropriate financial literacy to develop a budget for the duration of the training period.
- Inform the individual on loan repayment, grants vs. loans, self-sufficiency, and occupation demands and wages.
- Ensure reasonable accommodations are available.
- Monitor the individual’s progress on a monthly basis (see “Monitoring” above).
- Determine the individual’s unmet financial need for the program of training.
- Determine if WIOA Title I funds should continue to be committed to assist the individual with completion of the program.
- Ensure WIOA Title I funds are in addition to and do not duplicate those otherwise available to the participant.
- Help coordinate tutoring services for a participant with the training provider as needed.
- Job search and placement assistance, including career counseling.
- Ensure all activities related to the training program are in accordance with the policy are being met.
- Confirm the training provider is on the ETPL located on the DLR website at dlr.sd.gov/workforce_services/individuals/training_opportunities/approved_programs.

WIOA Law §129(c)(2) & §134(b)(3)