

Job Training Reform WIA Plus Consolidated Grant Program

PART 1 - Flexibility

1. What is the WIA Plus Consolidated Grant Program?

The WIA Plus Consolidated Grant Program is the most important component of the Administration's proposal for reform and reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). This proposal builds on the President's call in 2004 to consolidate four Department of Labor job training programs and funding streams: WIA Adult, WIA Dislocated Worker, WIA Youth, and Employment Services. These programs will be consolidated, forming the base program that will provide each State a single grant to finance job training and employment services. In addition, States will have the option of consolidating into this program certain other Federal job training and employment programs.

2. What benefits will a State receive from participating in the WIA Plus Consolidated Grant Program?

The WIA Plus Consolidated Grant Program will benefit States in many ways. The current system of Federal job training programs is too complex, with multiple funding streams and Federal and State bureaucracies. As a result, not enough of the available resources are used to provide skills training for workers. Through program consolidation, States will be empowered to: train more workers; design a job training program and service delivery system that trains workers for jobs in the 21st Century economy; rationalize the way they deliver related services; achieve better results; and reduce administrative overhead. States who opt to add programs to the consolidated grant will experience even greater flexibility and gains for workers and employers.

3. How will this proposal help States meet the needs of business?

In order to remain competitive in the global economy, businesses must keep pace with innovation and technology. Federally-funded job training programs must be agile enough to meet the changing skill needs driven by innovation and technology. Under the current system, States and local communities are bound by restrictive funding streams and administrative requirements. This proposal removes those requirements and allows States to create new, flexible systems that meet the needs of business while ensuring that more workers receive job training and no worker is left behind.

4. Are States required to participate in the WIA Plus Consolidated Grant Program?

Yes, but States will choose their level of participation. The WIA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs and Employment Services will be consolidated, with each State receiving a single grant from the Federal government. In addition, States may opt to consolidate into this program certain other Federal job training and employment programs.

5. What programs are included in the “Plus”—the optional part of the program?

States may choose to consolidate the following programs into the base program:

- Adult Education - Basic Grants to States (a Department of Education program)
- Vocational Rehabilitation (a Department of Education program)
- Food Stamp Employment and Training Program (a Department of Agriculture program)
- Trade Adjustment Assistance – Training Grants (a Department of Labor program)
- Veterans Employment - State Formula Grants, Veterans Workforce Investment Program, and Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (Department of Labor programs)

6. How does this proposal support the concept of One-Stop service delivery?

This proposal empowers States to take the One-Stop concept to a new level by implementing a single, comprehensive job training program designed to meet the unique needs of all participant populations as well as business. While the current One-Stop Career Center system is effective in many areas, too frequently the laws and regulations governing the partner programs stand in the way of true service integration and a customer focus. Challenges created by parallel service delivery structures, cost allocation, different performance measures and burdensome reporting requirements have made it difficult to successfully create comprehensive One-Stop Career Centers.

7. How does this proposal benefit local communities?

Local communities will greatly benefit from the increased flexibility made possible by consolidating programs and funding streams. Challenges created by conflicting rules governing use of funds and delivery of services will no longer be an issue. Most importantly, worker and business customers will have a single, comprehensive system where they can access employment and training services.

8. Who will be eligible for services under a consolidated program?

The State system will provide universal access, serving all jobseekers without additional eligibility requirements. States will serve adults as well as youth. Other parameters for participant eligibility will be determined based on which additional programs a State chooses to integrate.

States will determine priority of service for the consolidated programs, consistent with the veterans' priority of service requirements under the Jobs for Veterans Act. Priorities attached to the underlying programs will no longer apply.

PART 2: Accountability

1. Who is being held accountable?

Both States and job training institutions will be held accountable for results.

2. What performance measures will drive State performance?

States will be held accountable for their performance on three primary outcome measures: (1) entered employment rate; (2) retention in employment rate; and (3) earnings gains. Additional outcomes that apply to special targeted populations—including placement in the military, post-secondary education, or advanced training; attainment of a degree or certificate; and literacy/numeracy gains—will be tracked as secondary outcomes. States will be required to define adequate yearly progress in terms of increased levels of outcomes achieved by participants until, by the end of ten years, all participants who receive federally funded training will be placed in a job.

3. Is it reasonable to expect States to reach an entered employment rate of 100%?

Although this goal will be challenging to attain, it demonstrates the Administration's commitment to ensuring that all workers receive the job training and services that they need to find work. In order to ensure that no worker is left behind, States must strive to build strong connections between public and private workforce programs, employers, and education and training institutions to ensure that individuals are being trained for work in the industries creating the most new jobs in their community.

4. How do you expect localities faced with declining economies to achieve a 100% entered employment rate?

By using WIA Plus authority, Governors will be able to ensure the public workforce system is truly demand-driven and linked with state and local economic development efforts. It is critical that individuals be trained for jobs that are in demand and that the system be responsive to the needs of employers. An excellent model of how a local area has responded when faced with a declining industry is the "Textiles to Technology" program in North Carolina. This program which is a partnership of a community college, the public workforce system and business, trains workers who have lost their jobs in the textile industry for new jobs in the biotechnology industry. It is this type of innovative strategy that states and local communities will be able to develop and implement under the WIA Plus authority.

5. How will services to targeted populations be ensured?

Governors will be required to certify that the State will ensure maintenance of effort as it pertains to participant levels for targeted populations.

6. What performance measures will drive the performance of training institutions?

The training institutions will be accountable for providing quality instruction. The measures will be two-fold: accountability for trainees completing the program of study and earning a degree/diploma/certificate/license, and accountability for the workforce outcomes achieved by the individual trainees served, i.e., employment, retention, and earnings. The training institutions will be accountable to the State; they will be required to demonstrate acceptable levels of performance to the State in order to be qualified and eligible to receive Federal job training funds.

7. How does this proposal differ from the eligible training provider provisions of WIA?

The intent of this proposal is similar to that of the eligible training provider system required under WIA. However, the WIA system is largely ineffective due to the burdensome nature of the Federal requirements. The law requires training institutions to report outcome information on all program participants, not just WIA participants. The reporting burden caused by this requirement resulted in many training institutions opting not to participate in the WIA system. The new reporting requirements will only apply to participants in the Federal program.