

# MERCED COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

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## POLICY BULLETIN

MCWDB PB # 10-21	Release Date: March 24, 2021
To:	All Merced County Workforce Development Board Staff and Service Providers
From:	Erick Serrato, Director, Merced County Workforce Development Board
Effective Date:	March 24, 2021
Subject:	Individual Training Accounts and Exceptions to Training Accounts
Responsible Official:	MCWDB Program Manager

### BACKGROUND

In order to provide participant choice in the selection of training providers, the Individual Training Account (ITA) system was established. Through this system, eligible Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) participants are able to choose their training, and as such, participants are expected to utilize information such as skills assessments, labor market conditions/trends, and training provider's performance, and take an active role in managing their employment future through the use of ITAs.

Training services may be provided to Adult, Dislocated Workers, and Out of School Youth ages 18-24 through ITAs. ITAs may be established on behalf of eligible individuals to fund occupational training through training vendors that have been evaluated, approved, and placed on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). Occupational Trainings must lead to industry-recognized certification, and align with the MCWDB's Occupations in Demand Policy.

### Participant Eligibility

ITAs are not entitlements and shall be provided to eligible and assessed participants who:

- a. are unemployed or employed at a wage or level that is below the level of self-sufficiency per the MCWDB Self-Sufficiency policy;
- b. have specific skill-related barriers to employment and will be unlikely or unable to obtain or retain employment that leads to self-sufficiency or higher wages from previous employment through career services alone;
- c. are unable to obtain employment that leads to economic self-sufficiency through core and intensive services;
- d. have the skills and qualifications to successfully complete the selected program;
- e. do not have the skills in one of the listed MCWDB's Occupations in Demand policy;
- f. have selected programs of training services that are directly linked to the employment opportunities in the Merced County area, central San Joaquin Valley or in another area in which the participant is willing to relocate;
- g. have a high school diploma, or its equivalent, and the appropriate reading and math comprehension level for the approved occupation. Approval may be granted by the service provider's Director, or his/her designee, to waive these requirements for specific occupational training if that occupation does not require a high school diploma and/or a specific reading and math comprehension level. A case note noting the reason for the waiver must be inputted;
- h. are unable to obtain sufficient grant assistance, including Financial Aid grants (i.e. Pell Grant, Cal Grant) and private, public, or institution specific scholarships;
- i. have demonstrated the following:
  - commitment to completing the identified training program
  - knowledge of the targeted demand occupation in the local area or proposed area of employment, perhaps through the completion of a labor market exercise;
  - knowledge of the job requirements and working conditions of the chosen career
  - knowledge of training courses available and pertinent performance and cost information

- the ability to meet the training provider's entrance requirements
- the training program is consistent with the participant's Individual Employment Plan (IEP) or Individual Service Strategy (ISS)
- attendance at all required appointments; and/or
- meet the above requirements and have not participated in a MCDWB/WIOA training program and exhausted the MCWDB ITA training maximum during the past 24 months as of the date of the new ITA request. An exception to this requirement may be granted on exceptional economic or personal circumstances with prior written authorization of the MCWDB Director, or his/her designee.

### **Selection of Training Providers**

WIOA program/Service Provider staff will assist participants to make well-informed training decisions and provide guidance in selecting a training facility and specific program from vendors currently noted as Active Status on the ETPL. Exceptions to the ETPL requirements may occur where special grant funding allows for flexibility. Service providers are responsible for verifying both the training provider and selected training program are listed on the ETPL and meet local MCWDB requirements.

The MCWDB has the authority to prohibit the referral of participants to training vendors and/or training programs that have demonstrated poor performance. Though MCWDB's system is based on customer choice, Local Community Colleges, Adult Schools, and other public training institutions will always be given priority for training referrals, unless there are no providers of the training within the local area. The service provider shall ensure that all training activities are provided at sites that are accessible to individuals with disabilities, and that all reasonable accommodations are made to provide services to this population.

### **Funding and Duration Limit**

The "Maximum Training Funds Available" on all total ITAs for any participant in a two-year period shall not exceed eight thousand dollars (\$8,000). In general, the maximum length of an ITA training should not extend beyond nine (9) consecutive months and should not extend beyond two Program Years. In some instances, trainings may last twelve (12) months, but should only do so when necessary to complete intensive, in-depth training. All trainings should be designed and planned so that they work to employ participants as quickly as possible, and should be in accelerated formats to facilitate this, whenever possible. In rare instances, trainings may extend to eighteen (18) months or exceed \$8,000 with prior written authorization by the MCWDB Director, or his/her designee. Exceptions may occur where special grant funding allows for flexibility.

More than one ITA may be issued to a participant, based on exceptional economic or personal circumstances, within a two-year period provided the total cost of all ITAs combined does not exceed \$8,000, and provided that the ITAs follow a Career Pathway within a career cluster. Exceptions to ITAs totaling over \$8,000 require prior written authorization by the MCWDB Director, or his/her designee. An ITA may fund prerequisite training if it is required by the approved training program.

Prior to receipt of an ITA, WIOA program staff shall verify the availability, or lack thereof, of other financing for training services. These financing services include Financial Aid (i.e Pell Grant, Cal Grant) and other grant or scholarship assistance (excluding loans).

WIOA program staff are responsible for documenting if the training provider and training program qualify for financial assistance and the eligibility/ineligibility for grant assistance. Participants are to use these other sources of funds first to cover training costs. ITAs would help to offset the unmet need after all other financial resources are utilized, up to the ITA maximum.

The leveraging of funds for the participant covering either the full training or partial payment of training fees should be documented on the ITA form and case notes. Funds expended on a training program for any individual, whether that amount meets the maximum amount or not, shall be determined as fulfilling the training agreement. An ITA shall cover the cost of training, including tuition and other training-related items supplied by the training provider (e.g., books, license fees, training materials, registration fees, specialized course-specific supplies or activities, uniforms, DMV printouts, physical examinations, immunizations, health fees and insurance) and should be noted on the ITA to fully leverage all funded activities.

### **Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) – General Provisions**

1. In no event shall an ITA carry a time or dollar balance after the training program is either completed or terminated.
2. An ITA shall be signed by the participant, the case manager, and the service provider Director, or his/her designee.

### **Invoicing**

Service providers must collect all training providers' invoices, including attendance records, evaluations, certificate of completion(s)/credentials/certifications, and all supporting documents, as agreed on the Training Provider Agreement, for review and verification, prior to the issuance of payment.

### **Exceptions to Individual Training Accounts (ITAs)**

Title 20 CFR Section 680.320 allows the use of contracts for training services other than ITAs under certain circumstances. These circumstances include only one or more of the following:

- When the services provided are On-the-Job Training, customized training, incumbent worker training or transitional jobs;
- When the local Board determines that there are an insufficient number of eligible providers in the local area to accomplish the purpose of a system of ITAs. In this event, the local Plan will describe the process to be used in selecting the providers under a contract for services. The determination process must include a public comment period for interested providers of at least 30 days, and be described in the local plan;
- When the local Board determines that there is a training services program of demonstrated effectiveness offered in the area by a community-based organization or another private organization to serve individuals with barriers to employment;
- Referencing 20 CFR 680.320 (b) (1-14). The local Board must develop criteria to be used in determining demonstrated effectiveness as required in 20 CFR 680.320(a)(3)(i-iii);
- When the local Board determines that it would be most appropriate to contract with an institution of higher education or other eligible provider of training services in order to facilitate the training of multiple individuals in in-demand industry sectors or occupations, provided that the contract does not limit consumer choice; and
- When the local Board is considering entering into a pay-for-performance contract consistent with the requirements of 20 CFR 683.510.

### **References**

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014

Title 20 CFR 680.230

Title 20 CFR 680.300-340

Title 20 CFR 680.320

Title 20 CFR 680.510

Title 20 CFR 681.550