

## **POLICY – CAREER SCHOLARSHIP (ITA)**

### **Background**

In accordance with Title I Training Provider Certification Policy Guide, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) established an approach to funding occupational training for adults and dislocated workers. The WIOA strategy is intended to enhance customer choice through a system of Individual Training Account (ITA) vouchers, which the Workforce Board of Will County will refer to as Career Scholarships, while assuring program quality through a provider certification system.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act regulations state “WIOA provides States and local areas with significant flexibility to deliver services in ways that best serve the particular needs of each State and local communities. These regulations support that principle; wherever possible, program design options and categories of service are defined broadly. Section 663.420(b) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act permits state and local boards to establish ITA limitations in various ways that still maximize customer choice while looking at the needs of the individual, and the availability of funds. The final rule (20 CFR Part 652 et al.) notes that access to training is not an entitlement”.

### **Objective**

This policy will ensure that Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act training funds are used in the most efficient and effective manner to link residents of Will County with the employment opportunities most likely to lead to long term economic self-sufficiency.

This policy will also enable the Workforce Investment Board to create a stronger link between the workforce preparation activities in the County and economic development activities.

### **Recommendations**

The “Career Scholarship” policy shall not conflict with any requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, WIOA Regulations, or the Governor’s Training Provider Certification Standards.

Demand Occupations/Targeted Industries - Career Scholarships shall only be awarded in occupations that are deemed in demand by the Workforce Investment Board of Will County through the use of the Illinois Department of Employment Security’s Labor Market Information System or local labor market information. In addition, key industry sectors identified by the Will County State of the Workforce Report, the Will County Targeted Industry and Occupational Analysis, and the Critical Skill Shortages Analysis will be examined for potential demand occupations. Targeting demand occupations ensures a closer link to the local economy and future economic development and provides better opportunities for sustained employment.

For occupations in demand where the occupational wage is at or near the federal minimum wage, a defined career path must be identified prior to awarding of a Career Scholarship.

The System and Trends Committee will develop a list of demand occupations annually for review and approval by the Workforce Investment Board of Will County.

This policy will “grandfather” any customer currently in a training program not identified on the list of demand occupations.

Career Scholarship Duration - Career Scholarships shall be awarded for a maximum of three years or one program; whichever is shorter, during a customer’s lifetime. A Career Scholarship (ITA) awarded through another workforce area applies toward the one program/three year lifetime maximum. Customers must be making significant progress towards successful completion of their program as determined by their Career Advisor at the Workforce Services Division of Will County. Customers who have not exceeded the training maximum, were previously enrolled in

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WIA/WIOA training and exited the program without a credential or employment will not be reconsidered for training unless they were exited with a documented medical reason that has since been resolved or were exited because of military duty.

Career Scholarship Value - The dollar value of Career Scholarships will be reviewed and approved by the Workforce Investment Board of Will County on an annual basis.

Allowable Career Scholarships Costs - Career Scholarships may be applied to the cost tuition and fees. In addition to a Career Scholarship, participants may receive supportive service funds to cover the cost of books, required supplies, and other program requirements such as background checks, physicals, immunizations, etc.

Customer Requirements - Customers seeking a Career Scholarship must be eligible for training services under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and under the policies of the Workforce Investment Board of Will County. Customers seeking eligibility for services as a dislocated worker shall be determined using a "look back period" of two years. The "look back period" shall be defined as the time period from a person's dislocation event to the present.

Priority for Career Scholarships will be given to customers residing or working in Will County. Workers who have been dislocated from a Will County employer but who reside outside of Will County be considered for a Career Scholarship if funds are available. They may also be referred to the workforce area where they reside for services.

In order to be eligible for a Career Scholarship, customers must show proof of eligibility for occupational licensure or employment. For example, customers interested in obtaining a career scholarship for a health care program must show proof of criminal background check as required by the Illinois Department of Professional Regulation for licensure and/or employment.

Customers already possessing a Bachelor's degree or higher may be considered for a Career Scholarship if the degree was earned more than five years ago. Any program over the certificate level must be approved by the Director. Career Scholarships may be awarded to complete the final two years of coursework for a Bachelor's Degree in an occupational or technical program. Career Scholarships will be awarded to obtain post Baccalaureate Degrees/Certifications on a case by case basis as funds are available. Customers must be able to obtain the post Baccalaureate Degree/Certification in one year or less. Career Scholarships will not be awarded to obtain Doctorate degrees.

Customers must complete assessments as outlined by DCEO.

Customers who do not have a high school diploma or a HSE/GED must work with a Career Planner to develop a plan to obtain a HSE/GED prior to receipt of a Career Scholarship.

Customers must follow all procedures for obtaining Career Scholarships as defined by the Workforce Services Division of Will County.

All customers receiving a Career Scholarship must successfully complete the required Work Readiness Training program prior to the beginning of training

Other Financial Aid - Customers seeking a Career Scholarship must complete a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) to determine eligibility for financial aid such as MAP, Pell, Student Loan, etc. Any MAP and Pell grants will be applied towards tuition first and then WIOA funds will be used cover the remainder of the customer's total training expenses. If a customer is ineligible for federal financial aid because of failing grades in previous school attendance they are ineligible for a Career Scholarship for 5 years from the date of ineligibility. If a

customer is ineligible for a federal financial aid because of a drug offense covered in the FAFSA regulations they must follow the FAFSA procedures related to drug convictions to become eligible for a Career Scholarship. If a customer has previously defaulted on a Student Loan, a Career Scholarship will not be awarded until a repayment plan has been accepted by the guaranty agency and default status has been removed.

Training Providers - All Career Scholarships will be issued only for training opportunities from providers on the approved Illinois Training Provider Certification List which meet the local occupational demand requirements of the Workforce Investment Board of Will County.

Career scholarships may be awarded for programs that are provided exclusively in an on-line method when the customer has received prior approval by the career planners of the Workforce Services Division of Will County. In addition, the training provider must have at least one physical location in the US.

The Workforce Investment Board and the Workforce Services Division of Will County reserve the right to make exceptions to this policy on a case-by-case basis. Customers seeking an exception to the policy must provide written documentation to the Workforce Services Division Director explaining the reason for the exception request. The Director will make the final decision regarding any exceptions.

### **Assessment**

On an annual basis the following information will be provided to the System and Trends Committee:

Number of customers seeking Career Scholarships

Number of customers receiving Career Scholarships

Number of customers by training program/provider

Analysis of customers completing/not completing training

Analysis of customers obtaining employment after training

Analysis of customers in training related/non-training related occupations

Last Revision: October 21, 2019

Motion: Herbert Brooks

Second: Carlos Interrial

Previous Revision: February 27, 2017

Motion: Cheryl McCarthy

Second: Maria DiMuzio

Previous Revision: February 8, 2016

Motion: Pete McLenighan

Second: Nancy Baldwin