

Division of Employment and Training Services

Guidance

Individual Training Accounts (ITA's)

Overview

Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) are established on behalf of participant, where services are purchased from eligible providers. Payments may be made at the beginning of the training program or on an incremental basis. ITAs can be used for classroom training, and work-based training such as OJT, customized training, registered apprenticeship, incumbent worker training and transitional jobs.

Career planners and grantee staff may approve eligible participants to purchase qualifying training programs offered by approved vendors. Supportive services and needs-related payments may be provided to employed and unemployed participants who:

- a) meet the eligibility requirements for career services;
- b) receive at least one career service;
- c) per a comprehensive career assessment are unable to obtain or retain employment that provides a self-sufficient wage and will benefit from training;
- d) per a comprehensive career assessment will benefit from training;
- e) receive counsel regarding appropriate training opportunities and resources; and,
- f) do not have other resources available.

Funding Limit

At the beginning of each state fiscal year (FY), the Director or designee of the DETS will issue a memorandum outlining annual Individual Employment Plan (IEP)/Individual Service Strategy (ISS) funding limits for participants. The Director or designee of DETS may authorize a higher amount on a case-by-case basis to provide participants maximum choice in obtaining an appropriate training program.

Conditions on ITAs

- a) The career planner must consult with the participant regarding training needs and interests. This consultation should include a review or career assessment of the participant's interests, aptitudes, skills, and needs. The career planner shall approve only training for occupations in demand that are likely to result in employment in the local area (or an area where the trainee will relocate), and at a wage rate that is acceptable to the trainee. Career planners shall approve only training that the participant commits to complete, and participants shall certify their commitment in writing through an IEP/ISS. The career goal(s) must be consistent with the training selected.

- b) Funding for services is limited to participants who are unable to obtain assistance from other sources to pay for their training or supportive service, or to those who require assistance beyond that available under grant assistance from other sources. The career planner, in coordination with the participant, training provider, and partner agencies, must consider the availability of funds in developing career plans. All participants seeking training paid for by Federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) title 1-b funds, must apply for a Pell Grant unless the training program selected is not eligible for Pell funding or other financial assistance. Career planners must document the Pell Grant ineligibility in the case file.
- c) Participants may enroll in training while their application for a Pell Grant is pending with the following conditions:
 - i) the career planner must make arrangements with the training provider and the participant regarding adjustment to the allocation in the event of an award;
 - ii) if the participant receives a Pell Grant award, the career planner must reduce the ITA by the amount of training covered by the Pell Grant; and
 - iii) career planners should consider Pell Grant allocations for related expenses in designing support services to avoid duplication.
- d) The participant must agree to provide attendance information, grades and/or progress reports while enrolled in approved activities, or agree to allow the training provider to release such information to the career planner. Upon completion of career services or training, the participant must agree to provide or authorize the provision of documentation of completion of activities. When the participant has obtained employment, they must agree to provide the department with the name of their employer and their wage/salary information. Participants in federally funded WIOA must indicate a willingness to engage in follow-up activities for a period no less than 12 months from the first day of employment.
- e) Career planners shall provide participants maximum choice in developing an appropriate career plan or training provider, including out-of-state providers. Career planners may not refuse to issue an ITA solely because a training program is outside the local area. All federally funded out-of-state training programs must:
 - i) be on the Eligible Training Provider List in their state of origin;
 - ii) have an ETPL reciprocal agreement in place between Alaska and the other state;
 - iii) demonstrate superior cost-benefits or be exclusive programs not available in Alaska; and
 - iv) are subject to the review and approval by the Director or designated DETS staff.
- f) ITAs must be approved or authorized by the career planner **prior to** incurring costs that are paid by the ITA.

7. Required Documentation

Career planners must document ITAs as outlined above. At a minimum, career planners shall use case notes and an IEP or ISS to demonstrate the following:

- a) **Consultation with the participant** regarding training needs, including:
 - i) assessment of participant's interests, aptitudes, and skills;
 - ii) determination of the likelihood of participant obtaining employment (based on skills shortages) in the local area or area of relocation at an acceptable wage rate;
 - iii) determination of the likelihood of participant successfully completing their career planning goals; and
 - iv) participant's written certification to complete career services.
- b) **Coordination** with the participant, training provider, and partner agencies in developing the career plan. Where applicable, the career planner must document the award or denial of Pell grants or other financial aid. Career planners shall specify with whom coordination occurred and when it took place.
- c) **Provision of information** regarding career goals, student attendance, grade or progress reports by the participant or by the training provider; evidence of training completion through certificate, degree, licensure, or other documents; employer and wage information; and follow-up activities.
- d) **Rationale for funding**, including:
 - i) the amount of the ITA;
 - ii) if applicable, the approved waiver by the Director or designee for selection of a training program that exceeds the funding limits for career or training services, supportive services or out-of-state travel;
 - iii) evidence of the availability of other funds to cover costs, if applicable; or
 - iv) denial of an ITA, if applicable.

8. Denial of ITAs

Denial of an ITA may occur under the following scenarios.

- a) The IEP/ISS cost exceeds the participant limit per funding stream for the entire training program unless the Director or their designee approves an exception. Career planners must document the exception denial in the case file.
- b) The participant is unlikely to succeed in training based on an objective or comprehensive assessment of their needs or abilities.

- c) The training is unlikely to result in stable employment at an income level sufficient to meet the participant's needs.
- d) The participant or training provider refuses to comply with reasonable requirements and conditions regarding enrollment, payments, and information sharing.
- e) Staff shall not issue ITAs retroactively. The department shall not fund training that the participant has completed or begun prior to eligibility and issuance of an ITA. Thereafter, the career planner may fund training in progress if appropriate.
- f) Career planners shall not provide funds that support employment generating activities, economic development activities, investment in revolving loan funds, capitalization of businesses, investment in contract bidding resource centers, and similar activities that are not directly related to training for eligible individuals. No funds shall be used for foreign travel.

The department reserves the right to establish minimum performance standards for training providers and individual training programs. The department also reserves the right to waive dollar limitations for ITAs on a case-by-case basis upon review by the Director or designee if applicable.

9. Definitions

- a) **Approved or authorized** means documentation evidencing consent by an authorized signatory prior to incurring a cost. **Career planner** may also be referred to a career planner and is an individual who assists in the planning, coordination, monitoring, and evaluation of program services.
- b) **Individual Training Accounts (ITAs)** are established on behalf of an eligible participants to purchase training services from eligible providers selected in consultation with the career planner. Training services shall be linked to occupations that are in demand in the local area, or another area to which an eligible participant is willing to relocate. Only those courses or programs of course instruction that are specific to an occupation or occupation group or directly lead to employment for those instances of instruction that do not directly relate to a specific occupation or group of occupations use prevocational training services. The Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) may approve training for occupations determined to be economic sectors with high potential for sustained demand or growth in its area.

Exceptions to the use of ITAs in provision of training services are authorized in the following instances:

- i) Such services are on-the-job training provided by an employer, or Customized Training Plans.
- ii) AWIB determines there are an insufficient number of eligible providers of training services in the local area to accomplish the purposes of a system of individual training accounts.

- iii) AWIB determines that there is a training services program of demonstrated effectiveness offered in the local area by a community-based organization or another private organization to serve special participant populations that face multiple barriers to employment.
- c) **Individual Employment Plans (IEPs)** are an ongoing strategy jointly developed by the adult and dislocated worker participant and the career planner that identifies the participant's employment goals, the appropriate achievement objectives, and the appropriate combination of services for the participant to achieve the employment goals. The IEP is not a contract and does not guarantee services.
- d) **Individual Service Strategy (ISS)** is the documentation of an ongoing strategy jointly developed by the youth participant and the career planner that identifies the participant's employment goals, the appropriate achievement objectives, and the appropriate combination of services for the participant to achieve the employment goals. The ISS is not a contract and does not guarantee services.
- e) **Supportive services** may include but not limited to transportation, childcare and dependent daycare, housing and needs-related payments that are necessary to enable an individual to participate in training activities.
- f) **Needs-related payments (NRPs)** provide financial assistance to participants who are enrolled in full-time training and need financial support to remain in training. NRPs provide income support that would otherwise be available through other supportive services and sources such as Unemployment Insurance, Trade Readjustment Allowances and individual resources.