

## SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA REGIONAL TRAINING POLICY

### Purpose

The Southwestern Pennsylvania (SWPA) New Economy Collaborative (the Collaborative) provides a systemic approach to creating opportunity for workers and employers, weaving together five comprehensive, interdependent projects to encourage the adoption, upskilling, and innovation of robotics and autonomous technologies. Made possible by funds granted through the Build Back Better Regional Challenge (BBBRC), the Collaborative will expand the talent pipeline and allow people of different skill sets and educational aspirations to participate in robotics and autonomy careers, opening a range of training options outside of four-year and advanced degrees and ensuring that programs evolve based on industry needs.

The purpose of this policy is to set the structure for making training opportunities available to participants.

### Affected Parties

This policy applies to regional residents who will participate in training programs funded through the Southwestern Pennsylvania New Economy Collaborative Upskilling project. Staff of PA CareerLink®, SWPA Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDB), and training program providers are responsible for implementing this policy.

### References

- WIOA Section (3)(44)
- WIOA Section 134(c)(3)
- WIOA Section 134(c) (3)(h)
- 20 CFR 680.530
- 20 CFR 680.700
- 20 CFR 680.710
- 20 CFR 680.730
- 20 CFR 680.740
- 20 CFR 680.780

### TRAINING OPTIONS

Program providers will use interviews, evaluations, or assessments to determine training suitability, which relates to a participant's assessed ability and perceived commitment to attend training activities, successfully complete a training program, and to obtain and retain employment related to training.

1. **Individual Training Accounts (ITA):** An ITA is a payment agreement established on behalf of a participant with a training provider. Eligible participants may receive an ITA to attend an approved training program of their choice.
2. **On-the Job Training (OJT):** OJT allows employers to offer training to newly hired employees while engaged in productive work by subsidizing part of the participant's wages during the OJT period, with the expectation that the participant will continue to work for the employer once the OJT is completed.
3. **Customized Job Training (CJT):** CJT is training designed to meet the requirements of an employer or group of employers. To receive CJT funding, employers must commit to continued employment of participants upon successful completion of the CJT program and to paying a significant portion of the CJT cost.

4. **Incumbent Worker Training (IWT):** IWT is training intended to meet the requirements of an employer or group of employers to retain a skilled workforce or avert the need to lay off employees by assisting the workers in obtaining the skills necessary to advance. An incumbent worker is an individual who has an established employment history with the same employer for a period of six months or more.

## **PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

Participants may qualify for funding if it is determined that they meet the following criteria:

1. Be a citizen or noncitizen authorized to work in the U.S.
2. A resident of the 11-county region of SWPA
3. After an interview, evaluation or assessment, and career planning, PA CareerLink® staff have determined that the individual:
  - a. Is unlikely or unable to obtain or retain employment that leads to economic self-sufficiency or wages comparable to or higher than wages from previous employment through career services only;
  - b. Is in need of training services to obtain or retain employment leading to economic self-sufficiency or wages comparable to or higher than wages from previous employment;
  - c. Has the skills and qualifications to participate successfully in training services.

Note: SWPA consists of Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Lawrence, Somerset, Washington, and Westmoreland counties.

## **INDIVIDUAL TRAINING ACCOUNTS (ITAs)**

An “individual training account” is a funding mechanism through which eligible individuals can access quality training to help obtain employment in high demand occupations.

### **ITA Funding**

Participants may receive a maximum of \$8,000 per ITA.

ITAs are not guaranteed to any participant and are dependent on funding availability and a participant’s suitability for training.

*For Partner4Work (Allegheny County/City of Pittsburgh) training agreements, ITA funding distribution will be based on training program enrollment/start and program completion. Training providers will receive 50% of the total ITA funding amount when a participant successfully enrolls into and begins an approved training program. Training providers will receive the remaining 50% of the total ITA funding amount when a participant successfully completes the approved training program.*

### **Maximum Duration of an ITA**

ITAs will be valid for up to two (2) years.

## **WORK-BASED TRAINING**

Work-based training (CJT, IWT, and OJT) is training developed in agreement with an employer or group of employers for which a portion of the employer’s training costs are reimbursed. Work-based training is designed to train new hires or current workers of an employer(s) while the participant earns a wage on-the-job.

## **Employer Eligibility**

Employers may qualify to participate in a work-based training if it is determined that they meet the following criteria:

### Eligible Employer Types:

- Private-for-profit business;
- Private non-profit organization; or
- Public sector employer

### Employer Restrictions:

An employer will not be eligible to participate in a work-based training if:

- The employer has any other individual on layoff from the same or substantially equivalent position.
- The training would infringe upon the promotion of or displacement of any currently employed worker or create a reduction in their hours.
- The same or a substantially equivalent position is open due to a hiring freeze.
- The positions are for seasonal employment.
- The position is not full time, i.e. minimum of 32 hours per week.
- The employer has previously exhibited a pattern of failing to provide training participants with continued long-term employment with wages, benefits and working conditions that are equal to those provided to regular employees who have worked a similar length of time and are doing the same type of work.

### Employer Commitment:

To receive work-based training funding, employers must commit to employing or retaining participants full-time for a period of six months or longer following a participant's successful completion of the work-based training program. Employer commitments do not prevent an employer from firing an individual for cause at any time during or following the training program.

### Employer Assurances:

With assistance from PACL or LWDB staff, participating employers must guarantee that:

- All participants shall be provided benefits and working conditions at the same level and to the same extent as other employees working a similar length of time and doing the same type of work. This will include UC coverage where the employer is normally required to provide such coverage to its employees.
- The position provides the participant benefits per company policy (i.e. insurance, paid leave, profit sharing) and any benefits required by law.
- Employees who have financial responsibilities related to the receipt and disbursement of funding under the Agreement shall be covered by fidelity bonding.
- The training to be provided will be in accordance with WIOA 181(a)(1)(A) and 683.275 for wage and labor standards. Worker protection requirements are set forth in WIOA Sections 181(a) (1) (A) and (B), (b) (2), (3), (4) and (5) and 188.
- The employer agrees to cooperate with monitoring efforts as required by federal funding and adhere to all other applicable local, state, and federal rules and regulations.
- Funds are not used to directly or indirectly assist, promote, or deter union organizing.

- The employer agrees to respond to LWDB and PA CareerLink® staff requests for wage and retention information of participants.
- If the participating employer(s) has recently relocated, resulting in the loss of employment of any employee of such business at the original location in the U.S., on-the-job training contracts may not be granted to the employer until after 120 days have passed since the relocation.

**Training Length**

The maximum time frame for an OJT, CJT, or IWT is six (6) months. Duration is a function of training needed, not the maximum allowed under this policy. Staff should consult with the employer and utilize the Occupational Information Network’s (ONET) Specific Vocational 4 Preparation Range (SVP) to determine the appropriate occupational training needed.

Using the Specific Vocational Preparation (SVP) component provided by [ONET](#), the following duration times are recommended in addition to the participants past skill and experience.

LEVEL	TIMEFRAME
Level 1	<1 month
Level 2	1 month
Level 3	>1 month – 3 months
Level 4	>3 months – 6 months
Level 5	>6 months
Level 6	>6 months
Level 7	>6 months
Level 8	>6 months
Level 9	>6 months

**ON-THE-JOB TRAINING (OJT)**

On-the-Job Training encourages employers to hire or up-grade an eligible individual, providing the skills and competencies for a position the participant would not qualify for otherwise. While the job-seeker benefits by earning a wage while learning in a hands-on environment, the employer benefits through increased staff capacity and productivity. OJT provides the employer with partial wage-rate reimbursement in exchange for self-designed, occupational training and related supervision.

**OJT Funding**

Employers will receive a 50% reimbursement rate for an individual’s wage up to \$24 an hour, up to 40 hours per week. The maximum an employer may receive is \$10,000 per individual.

**CUSTOMIZED JOB TRAINING (CJT)**

CJT is designed to meet the requirements of an employer or group of employers. CJTs will be prioritized with employers intending to train five or more participants during a calendar quarter (three-month period) for the same or similar position. CJTs are intended to train each participant in a cohort for the same skill set rather than individualized occupational skills.

### **CJT Funding**

Employers will be reimbursed at 50% of the cost of training. The maximum amount a company may receive is \$5,000 per trained individual.

Participating employers must pay the remaining percent of the cost of the CJT. This payment can be in cash or in-kind services. CJT funding cannot be used for the wages of incumbent workers while they participate in training but may be used to fund the cost of administering the training, including the wages of the trainer. The wages of unemployed individuals hired because of CJT funding availability are eligible to be reimbursed through CJT funding.

### **INCUMBENT WORKER TRAINING (IWT)**

IWT is intended to meet the requirements of an employer or group of employers to retain a skilled workforce or avert the need to lay off employees by assisting the workers in obtaining the skills necessary to retain employment.

#### **Additional Participant Eligibility**

1. Be employed
2. Meet the Fair Labor Standards Act for requirements for an employer-employee relationship.
3. Have established employment history with employer for six (6) months or more
  - a. Exception: In the event that the incumbent worker training is being provided to a cohort of employees, not every employee in the cohort must have an established employment history with the employer for 6 months or more as long as a majority of the employees being trained do meet the employment history requirement.

### **IWT Funding**

Employers participating in IWT are required to pay 50% of the non-federal share of the cost of providing training to their incumbent workers. A maximum reimbursement of \$8,000 per trained worker is permitted under this policy.

### **POLICY EXCEPTIONS**

Under limited circumstances, exceptions may be granted to requirements within this policy. Exception requests will be reviewed based on their allowability under funding requirements and federal, state, and local policies and regulations. LWDBs will also consider funding availability, how an exception will lead to improved outcomes for the customer(s) being served, and other relevant factors. Requests for exceptions may be submitted to the following:

- Partner4Work: [policy@partner4work.org](mailto:policy@partner4work.org)
- Southwest Corner WDB: [staff@washingtongreene.org](mailto:staff@washingtongreene.org)
- Tri-County WDB: [msalony@tricountywib.org](mailto:msalony@tricountywib.org)
- Westmoreland-Fayette WDB: [jward@westfaywib.org](mailto:jward@westfaywib.org)

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