

Region 4 Workforce Development Board Prior Learning Assessment Policy

Purpose: To provide guidance on how Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Funds may be utilized to provide prior learning assessments to eligible participants enrolled in occupational skills training.

References: DWD Policy 2011-14

Background: Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) is a process that reviews an individual's learning gained from previous experience, including work responsibilities, and military and corporate training, in order to award the individual college-level credit. Through PLA, individuals who have acquired knowledge outside of a formal classroom setting have the opportunity to have that learning reviewed for college-level equivalency; PLA can potentially save an individual time and money toward completing a degree or certificate program.

Content:

Prior Learning Assessment Models

When offering prior learning assessments and awarding prior learning credit, post-secondary institutions invariably provide PLA in one of the following models:

1. Student completes a prior learning portfolio or completes a nationally-recognized prior learning test independently. If prior learning credit is awarded, the training institution receives funding based upon the number of credits awarded.
2. Training Institution offers prior learning assessment course, where student develops a prior learning assessment portfolio with an instructor and/or completes a nationally-recognized prior learning test. Student receives credit for completing the course, and could be awarded prior learning credit based upon prior learning experiences. The training institution first receives tuition for the credit-bearing course, and following the review of the student's portfolio, additional payment based upon the number of prior learning credits awarded to the student.
3. A third-party organization or institution offers prior learning assessment courses to prospective post-secondary students. The third-party organization assists the student in developing a prior learning portfolio and awards credit to student for completing the course as well as prior learning credit based upon a review of the prior learning portfolio or completion of a nationally-recognized prior learning test. The credit earned through both the prior learning assessment course and the award of prior learning credit is (then transferred to the post-secondary institution that the student is attending for occupational skills training. The third-party organization first receives tuition for the credit-bearing course, and following the review of the student's portfolio, additional payment based upon the number of prior learning credits awarded to the student.

When appropriate, any or all of the three models may be utilized by WIOA grantees to fund PLA for eligible WIOA participants.

State Requirements for Utilizing WIOA funds for Prior Learning Assessments

The SWIC and DWD have imposed the following requirements that must be followed when WIOA funds are to be utilized for prior learning assessments:

- WIOA participant must have an Individual Employment Plan (IEP), which signifies the need for occupational skills training;
- The WIOA participant must be accepted into a program of study included on INTraining, the State of Indiana's list of WIOA eligible training providers;
- Prior learning assessment may only be utilized for programs of study which lead to an associate degree or a credit-bearing pre-baccalaureate occupational certificate;
- WIOA funds may only be utilized for prior learning credit that is applicable to the participant's program of study; and

- WIOA funds may not be utilized for fees associated with the transfer of credit from one institution to another, or in cases where an institution charges a fee for credits earned as the result of completing a nationally-recognized prior learning test, such as CLEP or DSST Credit by Exam. As examples:
 - Some institutions charge a fee to accept transferred credit. In a scenario where a third-party organization is utilized to provide PLA and award prior learning credit and credits are then transferred (with a fee) to the institution where the participant is receiving occupational skills training, WIOA funds may not be used for the transfer fee.
 - Most nationally-recognized prior learning tests (CLEP, DSST, etc.) are administered for a fee, often paid directly to the test vendor, in secure testing facilities. WIOA funds may be used to pay for the administration and scoring of the test. Some institutions of higher education charge a fee to award credit for successful outcomes on the prior learning tests. In such cases, WIOA funds may not be used for the costs associated with the award of credit as a result of the test.

Prior Learning Assessment Process

1. After a case manager has worked with the participant to develop an Individual Employment Plan, has determined that the participant is eligible to receive an Individual Training Account (ITA), and has ensured that the participant has been accepted into the associate degree or credit-bearing occupational certificate program, the case manager should work with the participant to determine if a prior learning assessment is appropriate.

When determining whether prior learning assessment is appropriate, case managers should consider a number of factors, including:

- The participant's previous experience, including,
 - Prior work experience in the occupation for which the participant will receive training.
 - For example, if the participant has worked previously as an electrician's assistant, and he/she is entering an Associate in Electrical Engineering Technology program, PLA may be appropriate.
 - Prior certifications or certificates earned by the participant in the occupation for which the participant will receive training.
 - Prior experience gained through military service that relates to the occupation for which the participant will receive training.
 - Prior experience gained through voluntary work that relates to the occupation for which the participant will receive training.
 - Prior to pursuing credit through the PLA, a customer should:
 - Take ICE
 - Take TABE, if relevant to determine if remediation is necessary
 - Receive academic and career counseling
 - Does the institution in which the participant will enroll offer prior learning assessments and/or accept prior learning credit?
 - If the determination is made to utilize a third-party institution or organization (Model #3) for PLA, the case manager must ensure that the institution or organization and its PLA program is listed on INTraining.
 - Will there be tangible benefits derived from utilizing WIOA funds to pay for prior learning assessment?
 - The case manager should perform a brief cost-benefit analysis, determining how the cost of PLA and any potential prior learning credit earned may save time and/or funds. For example, would the cost of PLA be less than if the participant was required to attend and complete the course at the training institution? Would the participant be able to complete the program sooner if he/she earns prior learning credit?
 - Will the credit earned from both the prior learning assessment course and any resulting prior learning credit count towards the completion of the associate degree program or credit-bearing occupational certificate program for which the participant will receive training?
 - Does the institution charge a fee for accepting transferred credits?
2. After determining that PLA is appropriate, the case manager should document the use of PLA in the participant's

IEP plan and case file, including justification for using PLA in the circumstance.

3. The case manager issues the ITA for prior learning assessment, following local processes for issuing ITAs.

NOTE: In scenarios where the student completes a nationally-recognized prior learning test without being enrolled in WIOA training-level services, if funded by WIOA, the test would be considered as a supportive service and not occupational skills training.

Track One Data Entry:

All PLA services provided to the eligible participants in this program will be recorded in TrackOne under the appropriate funding stream. Case notes will be entered in TrackOne providing details of the service provided to the customer.

Effective Date: July 2015

Prior Learning Assessment Checklist

When determining whether prior learning assessment is appropriate, Case managers should consider a number of factors, including:

	Yes	No
Does the participant's previous experience relate to the training?		
• Prior work experience		
• Prior certifications or certificates earned		
• Prior experience gained through military service		
• Prior experience gained through voluntary work		
Are the institution/organization and its PLA program listed on INTraining?		
Does the institution offer prior learning assessments and/or accept prior learning credit?		
Does the prior learning credit earned save time and/or funds?		
Will there be tangible benefits derived using WIOA funds to pay for prior learning assessment		
Will the credit of the prior learning assessment count towards the completion of the program?		
Does the institution charge a fee for accepting transfer credits?		

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	Yes	No
Does the participant's previous experience relate to the training?		
• Prior work experience		
• Prior certifications or certificates earned		
• Prior experience gained through military service		
• Prior experience gained through voluntary work		
Are the institution/organization and its PLA program listed on INTraining?		
Does the institution offer prior learning assessments and/or accept prior learning credit?		
Does the prior learning credit earned save time and/or funds?		
Will there be tangible benefits derived using WIOA funds to pay for prior learning assessment		
Will the credit of the prior learning assessment count towards the completion of the program?		
Does the institution charge a fee for accepting transfer credits?		