

Burlington County
Workforce Investment System Plan

Administrative Information

Description of ITA System and Service Priority Needs Determination

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 introduces a new concept in the provision of training services for customers of the workforce development system. A shift is required from spending training dollars on class size blocks of training to an individual training account system. In essence, where training and employment agencies have dealt with the training providers in the past, the new law emphasizes providing individual customers, who are eligible for training through the One-Stop Career Center System, with account and decision supporting information.

Through the individual training account, the customer is able to spend funds at any state and locally certified training provider. As training providers will be required to report performance information that will be made available to all customers of the One-Stop Career Center, informed customer choice will be the prevailing factor as to whether or not a certified training provider attracts any students.

The Workforce Investment Act also establishes higher levels of accountability than has ever been experienced before in the workforce development system. As evidenced by the new mandate that all training providers be required to be “certified” by the local Workforce Investment Boards and the State. This certification will be judged upon historical performance data of each program, as well as, pricing information and other information needed to facilitate customer choice. Thus making the “new” workforce development system more responsive to the skill needs of individuals and the local labor market.

In order for an Individual Training Account system to be successfully implemented, quality consumer information to facilitate informed choices must be made available. Initial performance data that the Burlington County Workforce Investment Board will require from eligible training providers includes:

- 1) Completion or Graduation Rates:
The number of students who complete a program during the reporting year that includes all students enrolled.
- 2) Placement Rates:
The percentage of all program graduates who begin a job in a training-related field, continue studies at a higher education institution, enter the military, or become self-employed.
- 3) Wages at Placement:
The median starting hourly wage of all program graduates who begin a job in a training-related field.
- 4) Program Cost:
The total price of the program from start to finish.

Prior to designing an individual training account system for Burlington County, the New Jersey Department of Labor needs to develop the framework for the statewide Individual Training Account system. Once the framework for a statewide system is in place, the Burlington County Workforce Investment Board and the One-Stop Career Center partners will be able to design a system that is consistent, yet locally manageable, to that of the states'.

The Burlington County One-Stop Career Center site will determine which customers are eligible to receive Workforce Investment Act funds for a training account based upon a customer's inability to find self-sustaining employment without an investment in additional training. Under the Workforce Investment Act, eligibility is not based on income level, unlike many of the programs that currently exist, but rather on the need for training to gain employment. Consistent with the law, priority will be given to people coming off of Welfare or other public assistance programs.

Additionally, if funds for individual training accounts are dramatically limited, the Burlington County Workforce Investment Board may give priority to those job seekers facing multiple barriers to employment and who are the most in need of training or skill enhancement in order to become employed. This may include individuals with disabilities, single parents and/or displaced homemakers who need additional help in order to become employed.

The amount of money to be obligated for a customer will be based on an assessment that includes a financial need determination of the customer and the customer's Individual Service Strategy. The amount of the individual training account will be determined on an individual customer basis and will fall within the Burlington County cap that is currently set at \$4000.00.

Workforce Investment Act supported individual training accounts are but one of several financial aid sources that can be used for training. The new law requires that prior to Workforce Investment Act funds being drawn, other grant sources and financial aid options must be exhausted. To make this work, the Burlington County One-Stop Career Center is exploring the possibility to form a partnership with a provider of educational financing. This partnership will enable customers to reliably figure out eligibility and access to various financial aid resources. Thus, becoming another leveraging tool that will maximize the County's Workforce Investment Act funds.

As mentioned above, before an individual training account process or system can be designed at the local level, the State needs to make decisions regarding:

- 1) How much money is placed into each individual training account?
- 2) Is it a fixed amount or does it vary by customer and are there any imposed caps on the amount?
- 3) What will be the mechanics of the system?
- 4) How will liability issues be handled?

The Chief Elected Official of Burlington County is responsible and accountable for the receipt of all Workforce Investment Act funds, as well as, additional outside funding from related sources. The Chief Elected Official may designate one party as fiscal agent with the authority to make payments to vendors, approve vouchers, and determine the share of cost of each partner as appropriate.

The Burlington County One-Stop Career Center System will not discriminate against any customer in the administration of the individual training accounts. Included in the policies of the One-Stop Career Center System is the mandate that no individual will be excluded from participation in the training programs for reasons of age, race, color, sex, disability, religion, national origin, or political belief or affiliation. All policies and procedures will comply with Federal and State laws prohibiting discrimination of any kind. Customers of the Burlington County One-Stop Career Center System are informed of their rights both verbally and in writing through the Customer's Bill of Rights (Attachment D).

Procurement Process for Service Providers Other Than Individual Training Accounts

The Burlington County Workforce Investment Board, Youth Investment Council and the One-Stop Career Center System will use the public procurement law NJSA 40A 1151A2, governing all State agencies to award competitive and non-competitive contracts using any Federal or State funds.

The selection of service providers will also be consistent with existing Burlington County bidding procedures under the New Jersey Public Contract law as well as, the rules and procedures of the Departments of Labor, Human Services and Education.

The primary method of competitive bidding for contracts is referred to as the Request for Proposal (RFP) process. Potential bidders are made aware of available funding for competitive bids through notification in local newspapers and through public notices mailed to interested parties. Grant awards will be available to public, private non-profit and private for-profit entities through the RFP process. As appropriate, "bidder's" conferences will be held to clarify any requirements for the bid submittal and grant awards.

The Burlington County Purchasing Department has in place a process for the evaluation of new programs, requests for proposals and other initiatives. There are standard evaluation elements and review requirements that address the local goals, objectives and priority use of funding. A copy of the review questions and process will be made available to all bidders' submitting a proposal.

All proposals will be submitted to the Burlington County Purchasing Department and reviewed by an evaluation committee appointed by the Workforce Investment Board. The review panels will either consist of volunteers drawn from the Board's general membership or from the committee that directly relates to the program or proposal. Panel

members will be those individuals who have no direct relationship to the entities submitting the bids and technical assistance personnel from the Workforce Investment Board staff to aid in the review process.

First and foremost, all review panels and committees review for consistency of the proposal in addressing the state and local goals, objectives, and uses of the funds. In addition, the review panels will evaluate all proposals as to their consistency with the Burlington County Workforce Development plan. Some of the areas, which will be covered in the review process, include, but are not limited to:

- Non-duplication of services;
- Labor market connections;
- Meeting community and target population needs;
- Past performance history;
- Reasonable and responsible financial/expenditure plans.

Procurement Process for Service Providers of Youth Activities

Proposals from local providers of youth services will be solicited and selected by the Burlington County Workforce Investment Board's Youth Investment Council using the competitive process described above.

To ensure high standards for both business and customer satisfaction, service providers must demonstrate their ability to provide and coordinate comprehensive services as outlined in the Workforce Investment Act.

The Burlington County Youth Investment Council will develop criteria to be used in awarding grants. The criteria to be developed will include, but not be limited to:

- Capacity to provide skills and needs assessments which will assist in identifying objectives which include Individual Service Strategies;
- Ability to provide follow-up services for at least 12 months;
- Provide evidence of the ability to coordinate and collaborate with other youth organizations, employers and school systems;
- Provide evidence of prior experience working with disadvantaged, special populations, adjudicated and out-of-school youth;
- Provide evidence of prior experience operating education, training and employment programs for youth;
- Demonstrate sound fiscal responsibility and provide their plans to leverage funding with other youth funding sources;
- Provide innovative youth program designs;
- Provide plans on the connection with the Burlington County One-Stop Career Center System.

The Burlington County Workforce Investment Board and Youth Investment Council require the following assurances from youth providers:

- 1) A commitment to collect and maintain the necessary data;
- 2) A commitment to report on the Workforce Investment Act required performance measures according to the requirements when they are finalized by the State.

In order to identify effective and ineffective youth activities and programs. The determination of whether a program is effective will be based on the following criteria:

- Past performance data;
- Customer satisfaction data of youth served;
- Provision of strong case management and the ability to track their program outcomes;
- Ability to provide support services to minimize the existing barriers of the youth;
- Ability to provide services, both academic and occupational, that assist the youth client in becoming self-sufficient;
- Demonstrate prior success in providing employment and training services to youth by securing a high level of involvement of the Burlington County business community;
- Ability to provide the necessary comprehensive guidance and counseling, including throughout the duration of the follow-up period;
- Ability to provide accommodations to special needs populations;
- Ability to effectively provide outreach to dropouts and other out-of-school youth.

The Burlington County Youth Investment Council will assure that eligible youth providers will provide the comprehensive range of services that are required to foster the overall and long range success of the youth population of Burlington County.

The staff of the Burlington County Workforce Investment Board will be responsible for developing the request for proposals for youth activities to be competitively sought. Youth services and activities that will be sought through this competitive process will be in compliance with the Workforce Investment Act and New Jersey State Plan criteria.

Proposals will be reviewed by those Youth Investment Council members who do not have a vested interest in the awarding of funding, thereby eradicating any conflict of interest or an appearance thereof.

Specific criteria to be used to award contracts include fiscal accountability demonstrated effectiveness in serving the population, previous success rates, and coordination with existing resources. Preference will be given to proposals which:

- Offer youth a comprehensive menu of services and activities;
- Focus on the education needs of youth;
- Provide youth exposure to the world of work through appropriate work experience;

- Provide youth support in meeting their career goals/pathways;
- Offer preparation for Postsecondary education and employment;
- Offer linkages between academic and occupational learning;
- Encourage leadership and citizenship development;
- Focus on the developmental needs of the youth population;
- Have strong connections to community resources and the business community;
- Provide follow-up support; and
- Provide assurances and methods to assess and evaluate their programs effectiveness.