

BACKGROUND

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 was signed by President Bill Clinton on August 7, 1998. The act reforms federal job training programs and creates a new, comprehensive workforce investment system that is customer-focused and helps people access the tools they need to manage their careers through information and high quality services.

PURPOSE

The purpose of WIA is to improve the quality of the workforce by providing workforce investment activities through statewide and local workforce investment systems and increasing the employment opportunities, employee retention, and earnings of participants.

PRINCIPLES OF OPERATION

WIA embodies seven key principles to support its purpose. By following the seven key principles, Phoenix Workforce Connection has designed a program that is comprehensive and accessible for all customers. The seven key principles are listed below with definitions for the WIA system, which includes adult and youth populations:

Streamlining services through better integration at the street level in the One-Stop Delivery System. Programs and providers will co-locate, coordinate and integrate activities and information, so that the system as a whole is coherent and accessible for individuals and businesses alike.

Empowering individuals in several ways. First, eligible adults are given financial power to use Individual Training Accounts (ITA) at qualified institutions. These ITA's supplement financial aid already available through other sources, or, if no other financial aid is available, they may pay for all the costs of training. Second, individuals are empowered with greater levels of information and guidance, through a system of consumer reports providing key information on the performance outcomes of training and education providers. Third, individuals are empowered through the advice, guidance, and support available through the One-Stop System, and the activities of One-Stop Partners.

Universal access. Any citizen will have access to the One-Stop System and to core employment-related services. Information about job vacancies, career options, student financial aid, relevant employment trends, and instruction on how to conduct a job search, write a resume, or interview with an employer is available to any job seeker in the U.S., or anyone who wants to advance his or her career.

Increased accountability. The goal of the WIA is to increase employment, retention, and earnings of participants, and in doing so, improve the quality of the workforce to sustain economic growth, enhance productivity and competitiveness, and reduce welfare dependency. Consistent with this goal, WIA identifies core indicators of performance, which state and local entities managing the workforce investment system must meet or suffer sanctions. However, state and local entities exceeding the performance levels can receive incentive funds.

Training Providers and their programs also have to demonstrate successful performance to remain eligible to receive funds under WIA.

Participants, with their ITA's have the opportunity to make training choices based on program outcomes. To survive in the market, training providers must make accountability for performance and customer satisfaction a top priority.

Strong role for local workforce investment boards and the private sector, with local, business-led boards acting as boards of directors, focusing on strategic planning, policy development and oversight of the local workforce investment system. Business and labor have an immediate and direct stake in the quality of workforce investment system. Their active involvement is critical to the provision of essential data on what skills are in demand, what jobs are available, what career fields are expanding, and the identification and development of programs that best meet local employer needs.

State and local flexibility. States and localities have increased flexibility, with significant authority reserved for the Governor and chief elected officials, to build on existing reforms in order to implement innovative and comprehensive workforce investment systems tailored to meet the particular needs of local and regional labor markets.

Improved youth programs linked more closely to local labor market needs and community youth programs include activities that promote youth development and citizenship, such as leadership targeted opportunities for youth living in high poverty areas.

Refer to the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 at www.doleta.gov/usworkforce/.