

**DATE ISSUED:** May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023

**TO:** WIOA/DW/MYP/WIOA Youth Vendors

**FROM:** Workforce Solutions Director

**SUBJECT:** Participant Support Service Funds

**PURPOSE:** To provide guidelines for the discretionary use of available support services funds; to help foster consistent support services funds use across the Ramsey County employment services system. Further, it is to clarify that Workforce Solutions encourages agencies to be proactive and flexible in their approval of support funds to reduce and eliminate employment barriers. It is recognized that an agency's ability to make expenditures is tied to the amount of support services remaining and available.

**BACKGROUND:** Workforce Solutions recognizes the importance of support services in working with Employment & Training participants. This memo provides guidance on proper use of Support Services.

**PROCEDURES:** **A. General Guidelines**

1. When resources other than the WIOA Youth/ WIOA Adult/DW/MYP Support Services funds are available, use those other funds first.
2. The Support Services line item budget is established to help agencies consider participant support funds requests, as funds availability allow and within reasonable quantities given the prevailing circumstances, to participants.
3. In keeping with this policy guidance, agencies should only distribute these funds when necessary to assist or enable the participant(s) in reaching their employment and training goals, thereby also achieving the program's overall performance goals.
4. These funds are available to MYP, WIOA Youth, WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker participants.
5. At the discretion of the agency manager, and the availability of remaining funds, support service funds can be provided for up to 12 months as retention support for exited Ramsey County participants.
6. Fund provided to participants, including payment authorizations, gift cards, bus cards and/or vouchers, work clothing, tools, food, work-incentive-awards, etc. must be recorded on the Support Services tab of the participant Workforce One

file. Copies of receipts or expenditure back-up documentation must be kept in the participant files.

8. Original signature of participant accepting support services or stored value cards is required for all transactions at the time of transaction. Participants need to sign a support services form (see item 10 below about required agency inventory logs and forms). Because of this, support services cannot be mailed to participants. If a participant is unable to come to the office, especially if the participant is working, to pick up support services, the counselor should arrange to meet the participant in the community.

9. Support service transactions must be case noted (the participant needs identified and expenditure rationale described) in Workforce One.

10. Agencies are expected to develop and use inventory control mechanisms (policies and procedures) for gas, bus and gift cards (examples are available from WFS Planners.) This includes accountability forms:

- a. Support service slips designed to collect information on each individual support services transaction (name, date, card #s, WF1 #, purpose/reason for support services, and place for participant signature).
- b. Logs to record the distribution of every bus, gas, or gift card, enabling agency to track, project, and control total support services expenditures.

11. Incentive awards are for the achievement of a significant milestone (attaining new educational level, employment, etc.) on the client's path to employment and self-sufficiency.

12. Support services payments should be issued directly to the business (e.g. car repair shop, school, bookstore, uniform store, etc.). On rare occasions, participants might be reimbursed if the expense was pre-approved and a valid receipt is provided.

13. If uncertain about whether a purchase can be made using support services funds, contact the Ramsey County Workforce Solutions (WFS) Planner associated with the program in question.

## **B. Use of Funds**

Generally, support service payments are related to supporting the participant in engagement, attainment of significant milestones, job search, education and training, employment-related expenses, or job retention. In some circumstances, support may be available to assist with the participants adherence to employment plans for social- and health-related services.

Additional details about allowable support service expenses can be located in each program's specific policy manual, provided by Minnesota Department of Employment & Economic Development (<https://mn.gov/deed/>).

**C. Unauthorized (Unacceptable) Expenses**

- i. Events such as amusement, diversion, social activities, ceremonial events, and related costs such as meals, lodging/facility costs, rentals, transportation, and gratuities.
- ii. Penalties and fines, parking tickets, traffic fines, restitution, other penalties, defaulted student loans, etc.
- iii. Meals. It is not considered customary or acceptable to serve a meal associated with direct program activities, such as support group, job club, parenting classes, or other similar events.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023

**CONTACT PERSON:** Agency Planner