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TO: Ramsey County MFIP-Employment Services Providers

FROM: Kate Probert Fagundes- MFIP/DWP Employment Services Division Manager

SUBJECT: Defining WIA approved Training and Credentials Programs

PURPOSE: This memo describes the guiding principles for Employment Services Providers when assisting participants in the selection of a training and/or credential program.

Employers have long been reporting that individuals applying for available jobs aren't qualified for the job, resulting in the present-day skills gap phenomena. While there are numerous training and credentialing options to help participants to achieve necessary qualifications, The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) has defined approved training institutions and qualifying credentials and the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) has adopted these WIA definitions. **It is recommended that, to the extent possible, Workforce Solutions and their affiliated Employment Services Providers, use WIA approved education institutions. These institutions are valued for their fair market-rate prices, governing bodies and regulatory standards, and employer-endorsed curriculum development work.**

DEFINITION OF WIA APPROVED TRAINING PROGRAMS AND CREDENTIALS

(Based on DEED policy #321):

1. *Training providers must be licensed, registered, and/or accredited by the state in which they operate (e.g. MNSCU) or by state-wide or nationally recognized industry groups (e.g. MN Department of Health CNA Training or National Association of Realtors).*
2. *WIA and DEED approved training providers are listed on [iSeek](http://www.iseek.org/education/collegeList?area=&major=&instType=&wia=W&tuition=&x=27&y=10) at: <http://www.iseek.org/education/collegeList?area=&major=&instType=&wia=W&tuition=&x=27&y=10>*
3. *A credential is the formal recognition of a participant's attainment of measurable skills necessary to obtain employment or advance within an occupation. These skills are generally based on standards developed or endorsed by employers.*
4. *Credentials may come in the form of:*
 - a. *Educational diplomas, certificates, and degrees;*
 - b. *Registered apprenticeship certificates;*
 - c. *Occupational licenses;*
 - d. *Personal certifications from industry or professional associations; and*

- e. *Other skill certificates for specific skill sets or competencies within one or more industries or occupations (e.g. writing certificate or leadership certificate).*
- 5. *Various public and private entities such as educational institutions, industries, or occupational certifying organizations have the authority to issue a credential including:*
 - a. *A state educational agency or a state agency responsible for administering vocational and technical education;*
 - b. *An institution of higher education that is eligible to participate in federal financial aid programs;*
 - c. *A professional, industry, or employer organization, or a product manufacturer or developer (e.g. Microsoft Certified Database Administrator);*
 - d. *A registered apprenticeship program;*
 - e. *A public regulatory agency (upon a participant's fulfillment of educational work experience or skills requirements) that are legally necessary for an individual to use an occupational title or to practice the occupation (e.g. State Certified Asbestos Inspector);*
 - f. *A program that has been approved by the Department of Veterans Affairs;*
 - g. *Job Corps centers that issue certificates; and*
 - h. *An institution of higher education which is formally controlled or chartered by the governing body of an Indian tribe.*
- 6. *Credentials should be industry-recognized, stackable, portable and accredited.*
 - a. *"Stackable," are a sequence of credentials that a participant can accumulate over time to help him/her move along the career pathway or up a career- advancement ladder.*
 - b. *"Portable," are credentials that are recognized in other settings and not just with a particular in-house employee training program.*

STEPS TO TAKE WITH DWP/MFIP PARTICIPANTS

1. Coach participants to receive education from WIA approved or occupational certified providers.
2. Assist participants to find the most affordable WIA approved or occupational certified provider.
3. Unless the participant has current grants/loans from a non WIA approved educational provider, or a unique training program is only offered by non WIA approved educational provider, encourage participant to focus on the benefits of a WIA approved or occupational certified educational provider when making their choice.

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CONTACT: Your Agency Planner