

Palau WIOA Waiver Request: Out of school 75 percent expenditure requirement

Palau WIOA and State Workforce Development Board is requesting approval of the following waiver in accordance with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) statutory/and or regulatory requirements.

Regulatory Requirements to be Waived – 75 percent Out of School Expenditure Requirement

Palau requests consideration of a waiver from the requirements in Section 129 (a)(4)(A) and 20 CFR 681.410 which require not less than 75 percent of funds allotted to states under Section 127 (b)(1)(c), reserved under Section 128(a), and available for statewide activities under subsection (b), and not less than 75 percent of funds allocated to local areas under subsection (c), shall be used to provide workforce investment activities for Out of School Youths (OSY).

Palau is submitting the following waivers to this statutory and regulatory provision:

1. A waiver of the requirement to expend 75 percent of funding on the OSY population. Palau is requesting that this percent be lowered to 30 percent.
2. A waiver of the requirement that 75 percent of WIOA Title I youth funds reserved by the Governor for statewide activities and spent on direct services to youth, be spent on OSY population. It is requested that it be lowered to 30 percent to allow flexibility of special project (in this instance, the recently awarded Apprenticeship State Expansion Grant) to enable funding of in-school youth in pre-apprenticeship programs) to eventually be enrolled in apprenticeship program, and to meet the vision and mission of the state.

Background

Statistics taken from the Palau Bureau of Education Administration, Ministry of Education shows that for School Year 2018-2019 there were a total of 897 students enrolled in secondary education and 2,155 enrolled in elementary education. Other statistics taken from 2016 Palau Education Statistical Yearbook shows that for Grade 12, Promotion was at 94.2%; Repetition at 3.6%, and Withdrawal/Dropout at 2.2%. It also shows graduation rate (Palau High School, only public school in Palau and enrolling most of the secondary school population) from beginning enrollment of 136 to graduating students at 130 that is 95.6%).

Education will continue to be an integral part in developing the Palau Workforce. Based on the 2015 Palau Census (latest official census conducted by the US Bureau of Census with Palau Government) (www.palau.gov.net/statistics 11,637 or 65.8% people of Palau (25 years and over) have attained at least a high school degree. In the same statistics, for children age 3+ and older, it shows numbers of pre-primary at 443; Elementary 1-8 at 2,006, high school (9-12) at 1,007, and college at 570.

In April of 2019, Palau President Tommy E. Remengesau, Jr. in his State of the Republic Address, stated that for year 2018, total Palauans employed were 5,699 (47.8%) while non-Palauans were 6,227 (52.2%). He stated that it is time for Palau to adopt 'Innovative Learning and Excellence'. To meet new challenges within limited resources, the nation must think outside the box -- consider its special circumstances -- and develop appropriate medium and long term plans for continued development. Only through strong and creative planning, along with enhanced partnerships, will Palau be able to develop the innovative financing options that will be the foundation for its sustained growth. And in order to implement these

innovative options, there will be a need to continue to improve the capacity of its people and government to access and implement these financial opportunities with the strengthened partnerships.

Employers—through ongoing informal conversations and several formal business-specific and general employer surveys—report they are unable to hire locals because of existing skilled workers shortages. Quantifiable need has been identified for nurses and allied health workers, engineers, mechanics, and machinists. And again, employer interviews also reveal anecdotal but passionate urging to strengthen the skill sets of entry level positions.

Further, the skill expectations in Palau’s key industries (business services, construction, energy and energy efficiency, and healthcare) are increasing, and we face a gap that must be bridged. Palau employers are looking for workers who bring substantial knowledge and skills to their work, along with a desire to keep learning while working. They’re looking for workers who have strong basic skills – math, science, reading, computing – along with the ability to work effectively in teams, who can write clearly, and can analyze and synthesize well. In addition, a range of skills and knowledge that are specific to a given industry and a particular occupation are expected as well.

This waiver request is in line with the President’s vision to cultivate a strong and diverse economy and develop a skilled and ready workforce. Specific to these broad goals, the President and State Workforce Development Board, its Executive Committee, and Youth Council are working to align workforce and education programs with goals of matriculation into college or credential programs, or skills to go directly into quality jobs, create career pathways for high school students that prepare them for post-secondary options such as apprenticeships and work-based learning experience. This will also give flexibility of the Executive Committee that serves as the Local Board and the Youth Council to improve youth services based on the unique local economic, education, and workforce pipeline conditions and youth expenditures will greatly increase the flexibility of the State Board and its committee and council to serve youth age 14-24 throughout Palau.

Waiver Goals and Programmatic Outcomes

Goal: Increased services to all youth populations but most especially those at-risk of dropping out of school population through the career pathways and sector strategies as outlined in the WIOA four-year plan.

Expected Outcome: Approval of the waiver request would allow the state/local areas to focus funding and services to all youth populations but most especially those at-risk of dropping out of school population to ensure that effective student career pathway guidance is provided prior to graduation. This pre-graduation intervention would also better prepare high school students for post-graduation success, especially for those that have barriers to that success. This will also assist the efforts of Career and Technical Education (CTE) of the Ministry of Education targeting in-school youth, seamless transitions into pre-apprenticeship programs to apprenticeship programs and work experience to post-secondary education.

Goal: Increase number of better prepared youths to meet growing business needs

Expected Outcome:

Businesses are constantly demanding more support of youth in the K-12 system assisting with work-readiness and soft-skill training that is currently being implemented by the Palau High School Career Academies. By having restrictions on funding to serve in-school youths, the State/Local Board have come to find within the last four years, that the WIOA Youth program are unable to fully assist the businesses in preparing K-12 youths for short-term training and credentials.

The waiver expectations will assist boosting up the skill expectations and demand in Palau's key industries (business services, construction, energy and energy efficiency, and healthcare) that must be bridged. Palau employers are looking for workers who bring substantial knowledge and skills to their work, along with a desire to keep learning while working. They're looking for workers who have strong basic skills – math, science, reading, computing – along with the ability to work effectively in teams, who can write clearly, and can analyze and synthesize well. In addition, a range of skills and knowledge that are specific to a given industry and a particular occupation are expected as well.

The common goal of the partners is to help youths to grow into healthy and productive adults. The workforce youth development connection of aligning WIOA program elements will be a shared common goal among the partners to achieve the best performance measures and outcome.

Physical and Mental Health

- guidance and counseling
- supportive services

Intellectual Health

- tutoring, study skills, dropout prevention
- alternative secondary schools
- supportive services

Civic and Social Involvement

- leadership development

Employability

- occupational skills training
- work experience
- pre-apprenticeship training
- summer employment

Alignment with Palau's Workforce Policies and Priorities

- Increase participation of employers in work-based activities including pre-apprenticeship training;
- Provide opportunities for student work experience and pre-apprenticeship training;
- Establish an improved link of communication;
- Develop evaluation and assessment;
- Work with policy makers and employers to reduce dependency on foreign workers;
- Offer appropriate talent development activities to students;
- Provide career exploration opportunities for students;

- Provide educators exposure to workplace; and
- Establish cooperative working relationship among all stakeholders.

This waiver will allow will allow the State and Local Board to have the needed flexibility of supporting Palau's youth and greatly improve the responsiveness to business needs and to allow them to develop and implement talent pipelines and career pathways.