



WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT (WIOA) PROGRAM POLICY NOTICE NO. 15 REV.2

EFFECTIVE DATE: SEPTEMBER 15, 2025

SUBJECT: ASSESSMENTS

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide local Workforce Connection Center (WCC) offices guidance regarding established standards for the use of assessments that minimizes duplication and provides information on the provision of basic and individualized career services for initial and objective assessments. It further provides information on the types of assessments utilized and accepted within the Northern Area AJC system.

1. Policy Statement and Scope

This policy governs the use of assessments in the Workforce Connection Center America's Job Center (AJC) system under WIOA Title I to ensure that participants receive the most appropriate basic and individualized career services. It is intended to:

- Promote coordination and consistency across WIOA partners in assessment methods.
- Minimize duplication of assessment effort by leveraging existing assessments when valid and recent.
- Establish standards and a shared framework for the assessment process, including timing, components, tools, and file documentation.
- Define which types of assessments are accepted or required within the Northern Area AJC system for both initial assessments (basic, screening) and objective assessments (in-depth, diagnostic).

This policy applies to all staff conducting participant intake, eligibility determination, career services, and case management within the Northern Area workforce system.

2. Governing Requirements

This assessment policy is grounded in the statutory and regulatory requirements of WIOA and related guidance:



- **WIOA §129(c)(1)(A)** mandates that youth receive an objective assessment of academic, occupational, and service needs prior to developing an ISS.
- **20 CFR §§681.300-681.320** specify permissible youth services and assessment requirements.
- WIOA career services provisions require assessments of skill levels, employment history, financial need, and supportive service needs to guide appropriate service design.
- Local policy must also comply with state and board directives on file management, confidentiality, and use of vendor or partner assessments.

3. Assessment Types and Their Use

A. Initial (Basic) Assessment / Screening

- Conducted at intake, prior to participant enrollment in services.
- Intended to identify immediate barriers, basic skill levels, and whether further assessment is needed.
- May use verbal interviews, short screening tools, self-assessments, or review of existing records (e.g., education history, prior assessments, partner database).
- Must be documented in participant's case file with date, staff conducting it, and summary findings.

B. Objective (Comprehensive / Diagnostic) Assessment

- Conducted after eligibility determination and before developing the Individual Service Strategy (ISS) or IEP.
- Provides deeper insight into a participant's strengths, barriers, skill gaps, interests/aptitudes, employment goals, and support needs.
- Components may include, but are not limited to:
 - Basic skills assessments (reading, writing, math)
 - Occupational interest inventories / aptitude tests
 - Career readiness or workplace competencies assessments
 - Work history, prior training, credential evaluation
 - Financial need, support services, personal barriers
- Where possible, recent assessments (within 6-12 months) from partner programs (e.g. Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation) may be accepted in lieu of duplicative testing, provided they meet validity and relevance criteria.



- The results of the objective assessment must be verbalized and shared with the participant and used jointly in developing the ISS/IEP.

4. Timing & Validity Rules

- The objective assessment should be completed before or concurrently with creating the ISS/IEP.
- Assessments of reading, writing, or computation must have been conducted within 6 months prior to enrollment or within a time frame acceptable by local policy.
- Other assessments (interests, aptitudes, work values) should be valid and appropriate for the target population and updated if circumstances change (e.g. new barriers emerge).
- Assessments done by allied or partner agencies may be incorporated if they meet quality and relevance standards and staff document that they were reviewed.
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5. Tool Selection and Approval

- The Northern Area AJC system shall maintain an approved list of assessment tools, selected based on validity, reliability, cost, appropriateness, accessibility, and staff capacity.
- Tools may include standardized assessments, commercial instruments, or in-house developed instruments, provided they adhere to professional standards and are validated for the population served.
- Local boards or committees must review and update the approved tool list periodically, ensuring new or better tools may be added.

6. Documentation, File Management, and Confidentiality

- All assessment instruments, results, interpretations, and staff-participant discussion summaries must be retained in the electronic case file (NMWCOS or secure repository), following file naming, version control, and document integrity practices.
- Assessment records must be maintained for the required retention period (typically 5 years or as stipulated by state/federal guidelines).
- Access to assessment records must comply with confidentiality and privacy standards; shared only under valid MOUs or data-sharing agreements among system partners.
- If assessment results are used across programs (co-enrollment), staff must document the rationale for reuse and confirm it remains current and valid.

7. Continuous Review and Re-assessment

- The initial and objective assessments are not static; staff must monitor participant progress and **reassess as needed** when goals evolve, barriers shift, or new service needs emerge.
- Any updated assessment must be documented and incorporated into ISS/IEP revisions.



BACKGROUND

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) affirm the WCC commitment to providing high quality services to customers that provide seamless service delivery and minimizes duplication. As part of the framework to accomplish this it is necessary to establish a uniform methodology and crosswalk for assessments for use and acceptance within the WCC.

DEFINITIONS

Assessment — For the purposes of WCC offices, assessment is a process to assist staff with identification of strengths, transferrable skills, interests, work values, and personal priorities as they relate to employment.

Basic Skills Assessment This is an assessment of the proficiency level of an individual in reading, writing, and mathematics. This assessment is conducted through use of a standardized assessment tool such as the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), GAIN, CASAS and MAPT.

A Basic Skills Assessment measures an individual's proficiency in reading, writing, and mathematics to determine academic readiness for employment, training, or continued education under WIOA Title I. The assessment must be conducted using a standardized and nationally recognized instrument, such as:

- Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE),
- Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS),
- General Assessment of Instructional Needs (GAIN), or
- Massachusetts Adult Proficiency Test (MAPT).

These assessments provide objective data on a participant's academic functioning level and identify whether they meet or fall below established benchmarks for entry into occupational skills training or Individual Training Account (ITA)–funded programs.

Purpose and Application

The Basic Skills Assessment serves several core purposes:

- To determine whether a participant is basic skills deficient (BSD) under **WIOA Section 3(5)(B)** and **20 CFR §680.420**.
- To help identify the appropriate level of training or support required prior to, or in conjunction with, enrollment in an ITA or other credential-based program.



- To support the development of an accurate Individual Employment Plan (IEP) or Individual Service Strategy (ISS) that aligns training activities with current academic and occupational readiness levels.
- To provide a baseline for measuring Measurable Skill Gains (MSG) and performance outcomes during participation.

Testing Benchmarks and Standards

The testing benchmark represents the minimum proficiency expectation established by the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions (NMDWS) to ensure that WIOA participants have sufficient foundational skills to succeed in ITA-funded training programs.

- Participants are expected to score at or above 70% on the Basic Skills Assessment benchmark as a prerequisite for ITA approval.
- If a participant scores below the 70% benchmark, the case manager must document a corrective action or support plan that includes:
 - Enrollment in remedial education, tutoring, or adult basic education (ABE) prior to or concurrently with training.
 - A follow-up or re-testing schedule to verify improvement and readiness.
 - Documentation of all interventions and results in NMWCOS under the participant's case file.

The 70% threshold is not a universal pass/pass/failure "standard" but rather a readiness benchmark designed to ensure training investments lead to successful completion and employment outcomes. It may be waived on a case-by-case basis with justification, such as demonstrated work experience or other evidence of occupational proficiency, as approved by the Program Manager or WIOA Coordinator.

Supportive Services and Developmental Activities

When the assessment identifies deficiencies below the 70% benchmark, participants must receive targeted support services and remedial interventions designed to enhance their readiness. These may include:

- Enrollment in Adult Education or Literacy programs coordinated through local partners.
- Access to tutoring, academic support labs, or online learning modules.
- Provision of supportive services such as transportation, childcare, or technology access to remove participation barriers.

Progress should be documented through case notes and updated assessment results to demonstrate improvement toward the established benchmark.



Reassessment and Documentation

Participants may be reassessed at any time to measure progress or readiness for training. A new Basic Skills Assessment must be administered if:

- The previous assessment is more than six (6) months old.
- The participant has completed remedial coursework; or
- There is reason to believe the participant's skill level has materially changed.

All assessment results, interpretations, and actions taken must be clearly documented in the electronic case file (**NMWCOS**) and maintained in accordance with **2 CFR §200.334** and the NALWDB Electronic File Management Policy.

Career Assessment — Is a process of assessing the interests, skills, personality traits and values and applying those to occupational options to identify which occupations best match the individual.

Initial Assessment (IA) The gathering of information from observations, personal interviews and any information provided by the customer. IA should be part of the eligibility process and needs assessment.

Needs Assessment — Working with the customer the WCC staff must identify and document barriers that would hinder or prevent the customer from fully engaging in and achieving career objectives. Staff must identify and record those needs and then identify local resources available to meet those needs.

Objective Assessment (OAF) Objective Assessment is a comprehensive and exploratory approach to properly evaluate the needs of customers without regard to services or programs available. It should include the full composite of interviews, career exploration, interests, basic skill levels and behavioral observations.

ACTION

During the enrollment process in the WCC, individuals must receive an assessment. Assessments are a holistic, ongoing process and should not be viewed as a one-time event. They provide valuable information that allows center staff to best guide an individual as they strive to meet their employment goal. The results of assessments must be explained to a job seeker and analyzed to provide guidance in determining action steps and services to be included in their individual employment plan.

One Stop Centers are required to provide direct linkage to one stop services provided in the One Stop system. Appropriate one stop partners and services for an individual are determined through the assessment process and based off the participant's desire to work with the various partner agencies. Active Resource Coordination is the first step in the development of a seamless service delivery system.



A. INITIAL ASSESSMENT

Initial assessment is part of the overall intake process and includes the initial determination of the following:

- Basic skills
- Identification of strengths
- Identification of workplace skills
- Career interests
- Work values
- Identification of prior work history
- Family situation
- Service needs

When an Initial Assessment is completed, staff should enter the Initial Assessment service and a case note describing the assessment results.

B. OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT

The results from an Objective Assessment assist in the development of a Title I participant's employment plan. An Objective Assessment is not required for Title III Wagner-Peyser only participants. Formal assessment results within the last six months, that the participant may have or a partner agency provides, are acceptable to use in place of new formal Assessments.

Youth. An objective assessment must be completed during the youth enrollment process prior to a youth becoming a participant.

The Objective Assessment shall include a review of the following.

- Basic skills (to determine basic skills deficiency, see EAWDB eligibility policy)
- Identification of strengths
- identification of workplace skills
- Career interests
- Work values
- Identification of prior work history
- Family situation
- Service needs

Encouraged Assessments:

- Digital Literacy
- Financial situation
- Reality check

C. BASIC SKILLS ASSESSMENTS



To minimize duplication of effort for participants, the Northern Area Local Workforce Development Board (NALWDB) will accept formalized assessments administered by partner agencies, educational institutions, or community colleges, provided the results are shared in a manner that meets documentation requirements outlined in Section D of this policy.

Accepted assessments must have been administered within the previous six (6) months of the participant's enrollment or eligibility determination to ensure that results remain valid and reflective of the individual's current skill level. If the prior assessment is older than six months, or if there is evidence that the participant's skills have changed significantly, a new assessment must be administered.

For purposes of establishing Basic Skills Deficiency (BSD), Attachment A lists acceptable assessment instruments and their corresponding Educational Functioning Levels (EFLs) in accordance with the National Reporting System (NRS) Testing Benchmarks. This attachment will be reviewed and updated as new assessments are identified or approved; such updates do not require formal re-approval of the full policy.

DOCUMENTATION

For offices to utilize assessments provided by other entities an actual copy of the results must be obtained for the E-file then the following steps performed:

- Assessment copies should be uploaded to the documentation portion of the NMWCOS and entered the assessment portion of the NMWCOS utilizing the appropriate file naming conventions established by the NALWDB and document tags.
- Assessment results should also be entered into the assessment portion of the NMWCOS. If there is not an assessment in NMWCOS that fits the assessment provided, include a summary in case notes and upload as previously described.
- When an Objective Assessment service is recorded, a detailed case note must be entered indicating the specific assessments completed, the overall results, and any identified barriers or next steps. Documentation must be clear enough to demonstrate how the results informed the development of the participant's Individual Service Strategy (ISS) or Individual Employment Plan (IEP). To ensure consistency and compliance, case files and assessment entries will be reviewed on a quarterly basis by program or compliance staff as part of ongoing monitoring activities. Additionally, a comprehensive annual review of assessment documentation and data entry accuracy will be conducted by the NALWDB administrative entity to confirm adherence to state and federal requirements under **20 CFR §683.410** and NMDWS policy. Findings from both quarterly and annual reviews will be documented and used to identify training needs, procedural improvements, and technical assistance for staff to strengthen assessment quality and compliance across the Northern Area workforce system.

If an Adult or Dislocated Worker participant refuses to complete a basic skills assessment within 60 days of eligibility determination, they may still receive basic or individualized career services as defined under



20 CFR §678.430–§678.440. *However, if a participant is eligible for funded services, such as occupational skills training, work experience, or other WIOA-financed activities, but fails or refuses to complete the required basic skills assessment within the 60-day timeframe, no funded services will be approved or provided until the assessment is completed and documented in the participant’s case file. For participants transitioning from Youth to Adult programs, a new basic skills assessment must be completed at the point of re-enrollment or transfer to verify current academic functioning and ensure appropriate service alignment. Previous youth assessments may be accepted if conducted within six (6) months of the new eligibility date and if the assessment remains valid for determining service needs under the adult program.*

This policy rescinds any previous NALWDB policy regarding subject.

INQUIRIES: Contact WIOA Program Manager at 505-986-0363.


Joseph Weathers (Oct 24, 2025 17:57:03 MDT)

BOARD CHAIR

10/24/25

DATE






Assessments ^N15 Rev.2

Final Audit Report

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