

Technical Assistance Guidance

TAG 64-2024

Issued Date: January 26, 2024

Subject: Eligibility Requirements for National Dislocated Worker Grants (NDWG) – Quality Jobs, Equity, Strategy, and Training (QUEST)

Purpose

This TAG provides guidance regarding eligibility requirements for NDWG QUEST funding.

References

Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 02-22; State Compliance Policy 1.6, and WC Policy ADW-030-01

Background

While the public health emergency declaration has been rescinded, the uneven health, employment, and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to create challenges for the nation's full recovery. Many of the workers most impacted by the resulting economic downturn were employed in the care economy, hospitality, and transportation and logistics sectors. These sectors are dominated by people of color, immigrants, people with disabilities, individuals who were formerly incarcerated, women, and lower-wage workers. Furthermore, global supply chain disruptions caused the displacement of workers who would have been eligible for Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program services; however, this program is not accepting new participants. These conditions continue the need for 2023 NDWG QUEST grants to support pandemic-impacted workers, industries, and communities now and for years to come.

To maximize benefits to individuals and communities affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, ETA encourages grant recipients to strive to enroll the largest number of eligible participants possible under the 2023 QUEST DWG. The participant eligibility categories provide grant recipients with substantial flexibility in how to apply them for purposes of NDWG QUEST.

Policy

WC, in coordination with the Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation (DETR), has established eligibility criteria and source documentation requirements for the NDWG QUEST program.

Guidance

Participant Eligibility

Any individual interested in being considered for NDWG QUEST must be allowed to apply. All applicants must receive an eligibility determination. **All co-enrollments with WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs must be approved by WC.**

Individuals are eligible for the NDWG QUEST program if they meet the following eligibility criteria below.

- Are **authorized to work in the United States (source documents required)**,
- Meet Selective Service registration requirements (if applicable) **(source documents required)**, and
- Meet the requirements for at least one of the following NDWG QUEST eligibility categories below. **Self-attestation is acceptable to validate eligibility for any of the five categories listed below.**

1. Dislocated workers, as defined in WIOA section 3(15).

2. Individuals temporarily or permanently laid off as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. For the purpose of this eligibility category, WC defines "laid off" to include individuals who:

- a. Experienced a temporary or permanent full separation from employment due to the COVID-19 pandemic;
- b. Experienced a temporary or permanent reduction in work hours from full-time (32+ hours per week) to part-time (fewer than 32 hours per week); or
- c. Left the workforce voluntarily or involuntarily, including retirees, due to familial or health-related concerns, including mental health/burnout, as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. This may include, but is not limited to, individuals who separated from employment due to expanded health and safety regulations, such as mandatory masking and/or vaccination requirements, and/or individuals who were terminated from employment due to attendance issues resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. Individuals who are long-term unemployed. For the purpose of this eligibility category, is defined as "long-term unemployed" to include individuals who satisfy at least one of the following criteria:

- a. Has not been employed in unsubsidized employment for **a minimum of two weeks** prior to participation;
- b. Has not been employed for any length of time due to incarceration;
- c. Individuals in substance abuse and/or mental health recovery;
- d. Individuals with justice involvement;
- e. Is a student engaged in secondary and/or postsecondary education or other training program(s) and is not engaged in unsubsidized employment;
- f. Has no work history and is entering the workforce for the first time; or
- g. Has received or been eligible for a full or partial, weekly, Unemployment Insurance (UI) payment. This includes, but is not limited to, individuals who are working part-time, but actively seeking full-time employment, and receiving partial UI payments.

4. **Self-employed individuals who became unemployed or significantly underemployed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic or general economic conditions.** For the purpose of this eligibility category, WC defines significantly underemployed as any individual who(se):
 - a. Is currently or was fully self-employed, but whose business revenue is/was reduced and/or expenses are/were increased as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic;
 - b. Is currently or was fully self-employed, but whose income does not lead to economic self- sufficiency;
 - c. Business has closed or reduced hours operation as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and/or resulting economic crisis, including the inability to obtain goods and materials due to supply chain limitations and/or the inability to maintain adequate staffing;
 - d. Was solely self-employed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, but has since obtained secondary employment to supplement their income as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic;
 - e. Qualified for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) based on their self-employment;
 - f. Business received Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan assistance or other pandemic-related business subsidies;
 - g. Business was negatively impacted by the termination of contracts due to the COVID- 19 pandemic; or
 - h. Became self-employed providing pandemic-related goods and/or services, and whose business has since been closed or reduced its hours of operation.

5. Has **at least one barrier to employment** (listed below) and are unemployed or underemployed:
 - a. Individuals who lack a high school diploma or equivalency;
 - b. English language learners or those with limited English proficiency;
 - c. Individuals who are basic skills deficient in math and/or reading;
 - d. Individuals with justice involvement;
 - e. Individuals with substance abuse and/or mental health concerns;
 - f. Is currently a recipient of public assistance or is considered low-income (within 200% of the LLSIL); or
 - g. Individuals who identify as a member of a historically marginalized community.

Action

Please share this information with all WIOA Title I staff and other interested parties.

WC will continue to provide technical assistance to support the workforce system. For more information and/or updates, please contact your contract administrator at your earliest convenience.

Technical Assistance

Available upon request.