

River Valley Workforce Investment Board (River Valley WIB) Certification and Re-certification Policy

Background

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) established a new approach to funding occupational training for adults and dislocated workers. The WIA strategy is intended to enhance customer choice through a system of Individual Training Account (ITA) vouchers while assuring program quality through a provider certification system. WIA Title 1B requires all states to establish procedure for Local Workforce Investment Boards to certify training programs as eligible to receive funding through the ITA system. The certification procedure must include a process for programs to be initially certified and re-certified on an annual basis. States are also required to set minimum program performance standards that must be met as a condition of re-certification and in some cases, recertification.

The State of Illinois' Human Resource Investment Council/Workforce Investment Board (IWIB) has established statewide minimum standards and procedures that allow the River Valley Workforce Investment Board the autonomy to craft local policies that work best in their unique circumstances. IWIB's policy also allows the River Valley WIB the flexibility to add certification requirements and/or raise performance standards when appropriate.

Requirements for Higher Education, Apprenticeship, and Other Programs

WIA Title IB places training programs and providers in two distinct categories: Higher Education and Apprenticeship Act Providers, and all other provider entities including Non-Credit Higher Education. The following table outlines how the providers must apply for certification.

Program\Provider	Higher Education & Apprenticeship Act Providers*	All Other Providers including Non-Credit Higher Education
Initially Approved Program Seeking Re-Certification	Determination made under subsequent eligibility procedures: performance requirements apply for WIA measures.	Determination made under subsequent eligibility procedures: performance requirements apply for WIA measures.
Existing Program Applying for First Time Certification	Determination made under initial eligibility procedures: programs must meet River Valley WIB requirements, but are not subject to performance minimums.	Determination made under initial eligibility procedures: programs must meet River Valley WIB requirements, but are not subject to performance minimums.
Newly Established Program	Determination made under initial eligibility procedures: programs must meet River Valley WIBs application requirements. Not subject to performance standards.	Determination made under initial eligibility procedures: programs must meet River Valley WIB's application requirements. Not subject to performance standards.

*WIA gives special status to post-secondary educational institutions eligible to receive funds under Title IV of the Higher Education Act, and that provide programs that lead to an associate degree, baccalaureate degree, or certificate; and entities that carry out programs under the National Apprenticeship Act.

Geographical Requirements

Training providers must apply in the local workforce investment area where their training program is offered.

Location of Program(s)	Where and Where Not to Apply
Program is offered in one local workforce area only	Provider must apply only to the local board where its program is geographically located. The provider is prohibited from applying to other local boards, unless the local board rejects the program or fails to act on it within a 30 day period.
Identical program is offered at multiple training sites in multiple local workforce areas	Provider must apply to the single local board in the area, which the provider identifies as its headquarters and/or primary location. The provider is prohibited from applying to other local boards, unless the local board rejects the program or fails to act on it within a 30 day period.
Similar, but not identical program is offered at multiple local workforce areas	Provider must apply to each local board where its program is geographically located. The provider is prohibited from applying to other local boards, unless the local board rejects the program or fails to act on it within a 30 day period. *It is important that a separate application be made to capture differences among the programs offered at different locations.
Program located out of State; or program not offered at a physical facility.	Provider must apply to the single local board from which it anticipates receiving the most students. For re-certification, the provider must apply to the local board from which it received the most students during the past year.

Programs will be eligible to apply for initial certification at any time. Programs certified must be reviewed for re-certification annually. Providers can apply on-line at www.ilworkforce.org/providercertification.htm or a link available through www.rivervalleywib.org

Applicants are required to document at least one of the following criteria for initial eligibility.

- The provider is currently approved or has received accreditation under an existing process.
- The program has been recognized by the industry as meeting the standards necessary for approval or accreditation.
- The provider is receiving or has received funds for a program for which certification is being sought under a grant, contract or voucher from an agency within the Illinois workforce development system within 3 years of the date of application.

If the above do not apply, then the following must apply:

- The provider must demonstrate that the program responds to employer demand through a feasibility study of the area, labor market information, and letters of support from employers, or such other means as the River Valley WIB deem appropriate.

Applicants are required to document all of the following:

- Applicants are required to provide the number of years the provider has been in operation.
- Applicants are required to provide the date of program inception.
- Applicants are required to provide the duration of program by contact hour.
- Applicants are required to provide a copy of accreditation, industry standard approval, or other approved documentation.
- Applicants are required to provide the program cost; and specify what is included in that cost figure.
- Applicants are required to describe how it includes the equal opportunity assurance in its application for financial assistance under Title I of the Workforce Investment Act. The equal opportunity assurance is described in 29 CFR Part 37.20.
*Attachment A.
- Applicants are required to describe how it provides programmatic and architectural accessibility as required by subpart C of 29 CFR Part 32.
*Attachment B.

Applicants are required to register on the following system as a condition of certification/re-certification:

- Illinois Common Performance Management System (ICPMS) at www.ilworkforce.org/ICPMS.htm

Providers are required to submit social security numbers of each program participant from the last year; the start date of each program participant from the last year; indication whether the exiter completed the program; and information on the most recent 30 exiters, if the number of exiter for a given reporting period is less than 30.

If the provider does not have social security numbers because the program is new, or because it was not in the practice of collecting participant social security numbers, they must submit a signed letter to document reason identified and include a statement of their intent to begin collecting required information immediately.

Information provided must be thorough and complete.

Customer Choice

- The River Valley WIB supports WIA section 122(e)(4)(b) requiring that individuals eligible to receive training be given the opportunity to select any eligible provider from any local area that is included on the statewide list of eligible providers.

- The River Valley WIB supports the preamble of the Department of Labor (DOL) final rule, indicating that they will not try to control the quality of training that their customers receive by limiting their customer's choice of training programs, rather they will ensure that participants are informed about the State and local lists, encouraged to use them, and informed of their right to choose any program on the list.
- The River Valley WIB imposes three conditions: 1) the training must be in an occupation for which there is local or statewide demand, 2) the individual must have the qualifications to succeed in the program, and 3) the selection occurs after a consultation with a case manager.

Populations

The River Valley WIB is uniquely qualified to develop its own area-specific strategy to assure services to all significant populations. The River Valley WIB will adhere to the State directive that the system should be as inclusive as possible, stressing importance for priority populations including those with multiple barriers to employment and persons with disabilities.

Performance

Minimum program performance standards must be met as a condition of re-certification, and in some cases, certification.

Categories of Training Programs

- (1) WIA regulations allow an initial exemption from meeting performance criteria for post-secondary educational institutions (eligible under the Higher Education Act) and whose programs result in the attainment of a degree or certificate, and for apprenticeship programs (governed by the National Apprenticeship Act).
- (2) All others not mentioned in (1).

Statewide minimum performance standards will be reviewed on an annual basis so that modifications can be made if appropriate. Programs are required to meet all the State's minimum performance standards for each program. They are:

MEASURE	MINIMUM LEVEL
All Student Program Completion Rate (ASPCR)	20 percent
All Student Entered Employment Rate (ASEER)	40 percent
All Student Average Earning (ASAE)	\$2000
WIA Entered Employment Rate (WEER)	40 percent
WIA Employment Retention Rate (WERR)	40 percent
WIA Average Earnings (WAE)	\$2000
WIA Credential Attainment Rate (WCAR)	20 percent

*Attachment C. Definitions of Performance Standards.

The River Valley WIB will review performance and subsequent eligibility determination for each program one year from the date of the program's initial eligibility. For the purposes of annual re-certification, performance outcome data must be calculated on a minimum of 10 program exiters statewide. The River Valley WIB will not deny program eligibility based solely

on the number of exiters. Performance review focuses on the program, as opposed to the provider. Providers must submit all data at the end of each month for performance review.

The River Valley WIB may, at its discretion, grant up to six months, from the annual re-certification date, (for a maximum of 18 months) of probationary approval to programs whose providers indicate that they did not collect the requisite data to support performance measurement. The River Valley WIB will only grant this extension to a provider that presents evidence that the required data collection is now underway.

The River Valley WIB will deny eligibility to any training program whose application fails to meet criteria set forth by state policy including annual performance and certification criteria set forth by the River Valley WIB.

The River Valley WIB supports the state policy allowing a provider to re-apply for certification when it can demonstrate its program quality with at least one year of performance information. Re-application can take place no sooner than one year from the date of the denial of program eligibility.