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State of Wisconsin
Governor Scott Walker



TO: **W-2 Agencies
Training Staff**

FROM: Margaret McMahon, Director
Bureau of Working Families
Division of Family and Economic Security
Department of Children and Families

BWF OPERATIONS MEMO

No: 17-10 (Amended)

DATE: ~~04/11/2017~~ 04/20/2017

W-2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	EA	<input type="checkbox"/>	CF	<input type="checkbox"/>
JAL	<input type="checkbox"/>	RAP	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other EP	<input type="checkbox"/> *

SUBJECT: **Wisconsin Works (W-2) Contractor Vocational Training Incentive
Payments**

CROSS REFERENCE: [2017 W-2 Contractor Payment Structure](#)
W-2 Manual, [Appendix – Activity Codes](#)

EFFECTIVE DATE: Immediately

PURPOSE

This Operations Memo clarifies:

1. The definition of vocational training as it relates to the Vocational Training Incentive payments for Wisconsin Works (W-2);
2. The verification required to show completion of vocational training programs; and
3. The use of the correct W-2 activity codes when entering vocational training into CARES.

This Operations Memo also announces a resource that has been added to the W-2 Manual to help W-2 agencies connect participants to education and training that will provide them with the skills necessary to obtain jobs in high-demand, high-growth fields.

BACKGROUND

As part of the [2017 W-2 Contractor Payment Structure](#), the Department of Children and Families (DCF) introduced two new types of Vocational Training Incentive payments. Section 6 of the W-2 Contract Payment Structure document states that, "DCF will pay a **quarterly** Vocational Training Incentive for each month a participant is assigned to Job Skills (JS) or Technical College (TC) activities and is in our numerator. DCF will also pay a **one-time** Vocational Training Incentive for the completion of the JS or TC activity." Recently, W-2

agencies have asked the Bureau of Working Families for clarification on the definition of job skills trainings that qualify for the Vocational Training Incentive.

Job skills, also known as “hard skills,” are specific talents and expertise an individual possesses that helps him or her perform a certain task or job. These differ from “soft skills,” which are character or personality traits. A job skills activity is an activity that results in the acquisition of a job skill. This memo is intended to help agencies distinguish between the Job Skills (JS), Technical College (TC), and Job Readiness/Motivation (MO) activity codes and assign them correctly when entering vocational training into CARES. W-2 agencies must enter the correct activity codes in CARES and scan the required documentation into ECF in order to earn the Vocational Training Incentives.

VOCATIONAL INCENTIVE PAYMENT GUIDANCE

W-2 ACTIVITY CODES: JOB SKILLS (JS) AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE (TC)

The following activity code definitions are located in the W-2 Manual, [Appendix – Activity Codes](#).

JS – Job Skills Training

Valid for the following programs: W-2, CF

Assign this activity:

1. *When a participant enrolls in a short-term job skills training (no less than 40 hours of classroom time and no more than 516 hours in length) that the W-2 agency has worked with the participant to arrange.*
2. *To individuals who enter W-2 already engaged in a job skills training program and:*
 - a. *The individual has one semester/six months or less to complete their program, but no more than 516 hours remaining; and*
 - b. *The W-2 agency determines that completing the program will help the individual obtain employment.*

The training must provide skills to help the participant obtain employment or to advance or adapt to the changing demands of the workplace. Training may include customized skills training to meet the needs of a specific employer or it can be general training that prepares an individual for a specific occupation within a particular employment sector. The training activity must be specific to the participant’s immediate employment goal.

Up to one hour of unsupervised study time for each hour of class time plus supervised study time may be assigned under this activity and tracked for attendance purposes. A statement from the educational program indicating the amount of study time required will be used to determine the assignment of hours.

Examples of job skills training include:

- *Welding*
- *Hospitality*
- *Data Entry*
- *Medical Assistant*

Total assigned hours must never exceed 40 hours per week.

TC – Technical College Activities

Valid for the following programs: W-2

Assign this activity when CSJ and W-2 T participants are:

1. Enrolled full-time (up to 15 hours per week) in a program offered through the Wisconsin Technical College System that requires between one and two years of class-time to complete; and
2. Employed or assigned 25 hours of work activities per week.

The 25 hours must include the study time required for the program (see new Technical College Study Time - TT activity defined below) as well as other work activities that relate to the training the participant is engaged in that will improve the likelihood of obtaining employment once the training is completed. This may include activities such as work study/internships, career planning and counseling, job shadowing, and work experience activities that relate to the training program.

Guidance on using the Job Skills (JS) and Technical College (TC) Activity Codes

Both the quarterly and one-time Vocational Training Incentives are based on being enrolled in or completing formal training. FEPs must enter vocational training activities in CARES as JS or TC, as appropriate based on the activity code definitions. As the JS and TC activity codes are limited to counting towards the WPR as Core activities for no more than 12 months during the lifetime of the participant, W-2 agencies must ensure that only formal training is coded as JS or TC. If the program does not meet the definition of TC, the FEP must evaluate whether the program is more appropriately entered as JS or MO.

W-2 ACTIVITY CODE: JOB READINESS/MOTIVATION (MO)

The following activity code definition is also located in the W-2 Manual, [Appendix – Activity Codes](#).

MO – Job Readiness/Motivation

Valid for the following programs: W-2, CF, TMJ

Report this activity for applicants and participants who are engaged in classes and activities specifically designed to prepare them for work. Activities are geared at learning general workplace expectations, work behavior, and job retention skills necessary to successfully compete in the labor market.

A high-quality job readiness program uses various techniques and approaches to build self-esteem and increase self-confidence. Attendance at scheduled sessions must last at least one hour. Examples of job readiness/motivation sessions include:

- Workshops on effective job seeking and interviewing skills;
- Resume creation, preparation, development and updating;
- Developing networking skills;
- Communication skills, personality types, and ability to relate to others;
- Instruction in workplace expectations (including instruction on appropriate attire);
- Workshops on self-esteem, goal setting, etc.;
- Courses on basic computer skills and use of internet; and
- Workshops on soft skills like punctuality, attendance, following directions, teamwork, getting along with others in the workplace, etc.

Activity may be completed independently or in a group setting.

Guidance on using the Job Readiness/Motivation (MO) Activity Code

There are other types of trainings that may be necessary and valuable to help participants become work-ready by teaching soft skills. However, most soft skills trainings are more appropriately entered in CARES as the Job Readiness/Motivation (MO) activity code. The following trainings do not qualify for the Vocational Training Incentive, but may be coded as MO. These trainings include:

- Trainings that do not culminate in a certificate, credit, credential, or employment;
- Trainings that provide only pre-vocational or “soft skills” content;
- Trainings without a formal curriculum established by trained professionals; or
- Trainings that are conducted by individuals who are not employed to conduct such activities.

Allowable Vocational Training Programs

In order for a W-2 Contractor to earn a **quarterly** Vocational Training Incentive, the participant must be *enrolled* each month in a program that will lead to one of the six listed credits, credentials, certificates, or degrees listed below, and the participant must count in the All Families Work Participation Rate (WPR) numerator. In order for a W-2 Contractor to earn the **one-time** Vocational Training Incentive, the participant must have actually *completed* one of the six listed credits, credentials, certificates, or degrees listed below.

1. Credits or a credential earned from a Wisconsin-based [eligible training provider](#), as defined by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Statewide List of Eligible Training Programs and Providers (including Continuing Education Credits);
2. A license, recognized by the State or Federal Government;
3. A certificate of apprenticeship completion;
4. A certificate of completion of a program approved by the Office of Skills Development through a Fast Forward or Blueprint for Prosperity grant; (For more information about Fast Forward and Blueprint for Prosperity grants, please visit www.wisconsinfastforward.com/.)
5. Completion of a customized training established with an employer(s) with the written understanding that the **employer(s) will make a good faith effort to hire the participant upon successful completion of the training**; or
6. A bachelor's or associate degree.

Verifying Training Completion

In order for a W-2 Contractor to earn a one-time Vocational Training Incentive, a copy or print-out of the completed course credits, credential, certificate, or degree must be scanned into ECF. For customized trainings developed with an employer, a copy of the written understanding or contract with the employer(s) must be scanned into ECF. For curriculums developed through the Fast Forward or Blueprint for Prosperity grants, a copy of the approved grant plan must be scanned into ECF. This policy has been added to the [2017 W-2 Contractor Payment Structure](#).

DCF will not review curriculums to verify whether an identified training or agency-developed training meets the criteria. If a W-2 agency desires to create a training that will qualify for the Vocational Training Incentive, the curriculum must be developed with an employer or approved through the Fast Forward or Blueprint for Prosperity. This policy ensures that W-2 agencies are identifying and coordinating with existing community resources and partner providers to reach the best outcome for the participant.

An Appendix to the W-2 Manual has been added to help W-2 agencies identify vocational training resources and ensure that participants are enrolling in vocational education and training that aligns with high-demand careers in Wisconsin.

AGENCY ACTION

W-2 agencies must familiarize staff with this change and update any relevant local agency procedures.

ATTACHMENTS

[Revised W-2 Contractor Payment Structure 2017-2018 Contracts](#) (changes are shaded)

[Appendix – Education and Training Resources for W-2 Participants](#)

CONTACTS

For W-2 Policy Questions in the Balance of State: Bureau of Regional Operations, W-2 Regional Coordinators

For W-2 Policy Questions in Milwaukee: Milwaukee Operations Section Regional Administrators

For W-2 CARES Processing Questions: W-2 Help Desk

DCF/DFES/BWF/DA and ERR