



**Memorandum of Understanding
Between the
CNMI Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Core Programs:**

***The Department of Labor – Workforce Investment Agency Division;
The Adult Education State Office; and
The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation***

PURPOSE

The purpose of this MOU is to formalize a cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship among the CNMI WIOA Core Programs comprised of the Department of Labor – Workforce Investment Agency Division, the Adult Education State Office, and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. Through this MOU, we look to improve our coordination of training and employment opportunities for mutual consumers/clients served.

Whereas WIOA is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy;

Whereas WIOA supersedes the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and retains and amends the WIOA-funded Programs (Adult, Dislocated, and Youth), Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973;

Whereas WIOA requires States to strategically align workforce development; Promotes Accountability and transparency; Fosters regional collaboration; Improves the American Job Center System; Improves services to employers and promotes work-based training; Provides access to high quality training; Enhances workforce services for the unemployed and other job seekers; Improves services to individuals with disabilities; Makes key investments in serving disconnected youth and other vulnerable populations; Enhances the Job Corps Program; and Streamlines and strengthens the strategic roles of workforce development boards;

Whereas, the authorizing and funding legislation of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended, which is Title IV of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act calls for improved planning, coordination and collaboration between the Department of Labor-Workforce Investment Agency Division, Adult Education, and Vocational Rehabilitation, unified planning and increased services to youth in need, including students with disabilities, this MOU will help to foster a regular and sustained partnership among the aforementioned parties that

involve: (1) unified planning; (2) data sharing; (3) leveraging of resources; (4) identifying duplication of services and streamlining processes; and (5) providing for an array of services necessary for consumers to achieve their employment goals in accordance with the provisions of law and regulations that govern each respective program's activities.

With this MOU, the CNMI WIOA Core Programs jointly agree to:

- 1) Engage in a unified planning process;
- 2) Coordinate resources and programs for a more streamlined and efficient workforce development system;
- 3) Promote the coordination of workforce activities to improve the performance measures of the Core Programs;
- 4) Leverage resources by sharing cost of training of mutual/co-enrolled consumers, as appropriate;
- 5) Identify and eliminate educational, architectural and employment barriers that may hinder individuals with disabilities who may wish to acquire access to service provisions under this MOU;
- 6) Share data/information on the progress of mutual/co-enrolled consumers and how the programs could effectively connect to and collaborate with employers/businesses;
- 7) Share and exchange information about vocational rehabilitation, adult education, and workforce development as well as invite the participation of the parties to this MOU in training activities that will prove mutually-beneficial;
- 8) DOL/WIA and OVR will work closely together to set aside a number of work-based learning opportunities for students with disabilities annually;
- 9) DOL/WIA and OVR should target a set number of mutual/co-enrolled individuals with disabilities to share funding for training and employment services;
- 10) Pilot a universal intake process to make co-enrollment a seamless transition for clients with disabilities and to ease the paperwork burden on clients for all programs; and
- 11) Implement a tracking and reporting system for consumers that have been referred to, or are co-enrolled in the CNMI WIOA Core Programs.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND PROVISION OF SERVICES

The following programs of WIOA supersede the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and amend the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, the Wagner-Peyser Act, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Title I – Adult, Dislocated, and Youth

The CNMI Department of Labor (DOL) – Workforce Investment Agency (WIA) Division implements the Title I programs of WIOA. WIOA Title I authorizes the establishment of workforce development activities for eligible Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Workers. WIOA provides job seekers access to employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and matching employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. The CNMI DOL WIA Division also houses the CNMI State Workforce

Development Board (SWDB) who is responsible for the overall implementation and monitoring of all applicable WIOA programs in the CNMI.

The mission of the SWDB is “Empowering, integrating, implementing, and innovating the workforce needs of the CNMI.” The vision is “To promote a workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses, job seekers and workers to support a strong and vibrant economy in the CNMI.”

Goals:

- Support pathways that lead to livable wage employment and upward mobility of participants.
- Promote and support participants’ efforts to obtain workforce credentials, skill development and training, and/or career or college readiness. Increase the number of participants who pursue and complete technical/trades programs and/or post-secondary education and specific skills necessary to compete in the CNMI’s critical economic sectors.
- Align, coordinate, and integrate the workforce development system to provide a quality and consistent experience for all participants.
- Create a data-driven workforce environment supported by market forecasts, surveys, evaluations, analysis, and assessment results, etc.
- Inventory and align the workforce skills needs of private sector employers and businesses with the education, service, and training provider offerings, so that participants are able to access the marketable skills to be matched to the private sector employers and businesses.

Eligibility varies for each respective program. Registration, In-take procedures and Assessments need to be conducted to determine eligibility.

Registration Requirements to be verified for qualification include the following:

- Valid Identification;
- Verification of Citizenship;
- Household Income for the past 6 month period;
- Social Security Card or Official Tax Documents;
- Selective Service Registration (Males 18 to 26 years old);
- Education and Training documentation; and
- Current Resume.

Additional Requirements may include:

- Public Assistance Recipient Documentation;
- Veteran Status Verification;
- Letter of Program/Service Participation;
- Certification of Disability;
- Letter of Notice of Layoff or Termination;
- Unofficial School Transcript;

- STAR Reading & Math, SAT 10, or CASAS Results

Title II – Adult Education & Literacy

The Northern Marianas College’s Adult Education State Office receives an annual grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The statutory authority for this program is the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014.

The mission of the office is to ensure that educationally disadvantaged adults of the community have the opportunities to acquire basic skills necessary to function more effectively and productively in order to gain upward mobility by providing opportunities that will enable them to pursue further education in support of the Northern Marianas College mission.

Goals and Objectives:

- To improve competency levels in language arts and mathematics to empower adult learners to participate more fully in community life;
- To prepare adults, who are parents, to become effective teachers of their children;
- Prepare adult learners who did not complete their high school education to pass the high school equivalency tests; and
- To prepare adults for successful job placement or career performance.

Who is Eligible?

- 16 years or older; and
- Is NOT enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law; and
- Has NOT achieved an equivalent level of education; and
- Is an English Language Learner

(Taken from the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act of 2014)

Application and Intake Process:

Step 1: Make an appointment to go through application and advising

Step 2: Take the assessment test (by appointment only)

Step 3: Take O*Net Interest Profiler

Step 4: Register for classes/independent Study

Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation

The mission of OVR is to increase employment and promote independence among eligible individuals with disabilities throughout the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). In doing so, OVR provides vocational rehabilitation services to eligible individuals with disabilities who meet certain eligibility criteria to achieve competitive integrated employment – as

defined by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) – within their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice.

An applicant is eligible for vocational rehabilitation services if the individual:

- A) Is an individual with a disability; and
- B) Has a physical or mental impairment which for such individual constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment; and can benefit in terms of an employment outcome from vocational rehabilitation services; and
- C) Requires vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, secure, retain, or advance in employment; and
- D) Has legal status to allow employment in the CNMI or U.S.

Vocational rehabilitation services are designed to lessen the impact or eliminate entirely the barriers to employment. Services include, but are not limited to: assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs, vocational rehabilitation counseling and guidance, information and referral, vocational and other training services, job search/placement assistance/job retention services, supported employment services, post-employment services, rehabilitation/assistive technology, pre-employment transition services, etc. Services are individualized and provided in the context of an approved Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). OVR consumers may be required to financially participate in their rehabilitation program.

OVR's responsibility for administrative activities that cannot be delegated to any other agency or individual includes:

- Decisions affecting eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services, the nature and scope of available services, and the provision of these services;
- Determination that an individual has achieved an employment outcome;
- Policy formulation and implementation; and
- Allocation and expenditure of vocational rehabilitation services.

SPECIFIC PARTNER RESPONSIBILITIES

In consideration of the mutual aims and desires of the CNMI WIOA Core Programs to this MOU, and in recognition of the public benefit to be derived from effective implementation of this MOU, the parties agree that their respective responsibilities under this MOU shall be as follows:

Department of Labor – Workforce Investment Agency Division agrees to:

- Process the WIOA application of interested individuals with disabilities who desire training and employment assistance services in a timely manner but no later than ten working days after date of application;
- Refer WIOA clients who are individuals with disabilities to OVR;
- Refer WIOA clients, who may need to acquire basic skills necessary to function more effectively and productively in order to gain upward mobility, to the Adult Education State Office at the Northern Marianas College;

- Assess the skill levels, aptitudes, and abilities of applicants with disabilities as well as determine need for support services and make referral to other community agencies as appropriate;
- Offer career planning and counseling, job search, and placement assistance;
- Make available employment statistics information, including labor market update, job vacancy listing, job skills necessary for listed jobs and occupations in demand, and other relevant information;
- Provide follow-up services including sustained employment counseling and guidance;
- Provide training services such as work experience and OJT;
- Participate in shared funding of mutual WIOA and OVR cases and ensure such participation occurs with regularity; and
- Identify any duplication of services and streamline program processes as necessary.

Adult Education State Office agrees to:

- Process the WIOA application of qualified individuals who desire completing educational goals and workplace success training during the advising period;
- Refer WIOA clients, who are individuals with disabilities, to OVR;
- Refer WIOA clients, who are interested in training and employment assistance services, to DOL-WIA Division;
- Assess the educational skill levels of qualified WIOA clients as well as determine need for support services and make referral to other community agencies as appropriate;
- Offer workplace success training;
- Provide follow-up services such as educational and career pathway goal settings;
- Participate in shared funding of mutual WIOA and OVR cases (if allowable) and ensure such participation occurs with regularity; and
- Identify any duplication of services and streamline program processes as necessary.

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation agrees to:

- Process the OVR application of interested individuals with disabilities in a timely manner but no later than 60 days after date of application;
- Refer clients who may benefit from additional training and employment services to DOL-WIA Division;
- Refer clients who may need to acquire basic skills, workplace success training, and follow-up services such as educational and career pathway goal settings to the Adult Education State Office;
- Request and obtain from WIOA Core Programs appropriate documents that will help OVR to facilitate the application and IPE development processes in a timely manner (signed releases required);
- Provide vocational rehabilitation counseling and guidance, career planning and development, training (work experience and/or OJT), job search, placement assistance, and other services required to achieve consumer's vocational objective consistent with an approved Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE);

- Facilitate supported employment services to include job coaching for mutual consumers considered most significantly disabled;
- Assess the need for assistive technology to enable consumers to participate in training and employment activities;
- Provide guidance and information on disability employment matters;
- Participate in shared funding of mutual OVR and WIOA cases and ensure such participation occurs with regularity;
- Encourage individuals with disabilities that they refer to the WIOA Core Programs to self-disclose that they have a disability so that the programs can get a better idea of how many clients they have in common; and
- Identify any duplication of services and streamline program processes as necessary.

REFERRAL PROCEDURES

The parties agree to establish consistent and sustained referral methods through the use of telephone, fax, email, or in-person to ensure that appropriate referrals are made to each agency accordingly. The CNMI WIOA Core Programs agree that their respective offices will make available to interested individuals including those with disabilities the other party's informational brochures and applications for services. In addition, the Core Programs will promote open dialogue amongst the parties to follow-up on referrals and the progress of mutual/co-enrolled consumers. Furthermore, the parties to this MOU will ensure that prior to any discussion or exchange of information about a mutual/co-enrolled consumer occurs, a signed release is first secured.

CROSS-TRAINING

An important benefit of partner collaboration, coordination, and cooperation is the awareness of partner activities and the resultant referral of mutual/co-enrolled consumers. The benefits of the reciprocity of that cross-training are obvious. Disability awareness training (including how to recognize, accommodate and effectively work with individuals with hidden disabilities) will guard against failures in the system due to lack of knowledge or sensitivity to the needs of individuals with disabilities, employers, service providers, and other workforce development participants as well. Consequently, each organization agrees to develop training geared towards educating staff about the mission, goals, objectives, processes, and policies and procedures of each partner agency in order to facilitate increased understanding by staff at all levels about their partner programs. In those instances when one of the partner agencies is participating in training that might be beneficial or educational for the partners, they agree to, at a minimum, invite the partner programs to participate in the training. Nothing about this invitation should be construed to indicate that there is a promise to cover the cost of such training for partner programs.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The CNMI WIOA Core Programs covered by this MOU will adhere to strict confidentiality when obtaining applicant and consumers' personal information such as names, Social Security Number, medical and psychological history as well as other identifiable information. Any release of information must be recorded on official program forms. Aggregate or summary data which protects the identity of individual applicants or consumers may be shared.

FUNDING

The CNMI WIOA Core Programs agree that they will expend funds for administrative and client services within the allowable parameters of their governing legislation. The WIOA encourages shared funding and resources to maximize the impact on mutual/co-enrolled clients. The partners agree to actively find ways to share resources for case service expenditures and to engage in joint planning to increase the capacity of each partner to share funding for the benefit of their mutual/co-enrolled consumers.

ALLOCATION OF COSTS

The parties to this MOU agree to serve mutual consumers, as appropriate, with emphasis on leveraging of resources in consideration of limited financial resources of many if not all Federally-funded programs, including the CNMI WIOA Core Programs. The implementation of a cost-sharing arrangement will help the agencies to serve more individuals determined eligible under their respective programs.

AMERICAN JOB CENTER (aka ONE-STOP CENTER)

The CNMI WIOA Core Programs through the State Workforce Development Board have agreed to a separate MOU for the American Job Center or One-Stop Center.

TERMS OF AGREEMENT

This MOU becomes effective upon the signatures of the duly authorized representatives of the CNMI WIOA Core Programs including the Chairperson of the State Workforce Development Board. This agreement may be amended or modified at any time by mutual consent. The Core Programs reserve the right to terminate this MOU at any time, upon thirty (30) days written notice to the other parties at the addresses provided herein. Unless there is written notice to terminate this MOU, it will automatically renew annually.

SIGNATURES

The terms of this MOU are accepted by the parties to this agreement. Persons signing below are expressly authorized to obligate the agencies to the terms of this MOU. The undersigned parties bind themselves to the faithful executive of this MOU.



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5 June 2018
Date

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Date

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Date

Concurred by:

Josephine Mesta

Josephine Mesta
Chairperson
State Workforce Development Board
Commonwealth of the Northern
Mariana Islands

6/6/18

Date