

## WIA FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The following questions are asked by many of the customers of the Trident SC Works Centers who are interested in finding out more about the WIA program. Please note that the responses apply to the WIA program that serves Berkeley, Charleston, and Dorchester Counties. Other areas that also have WIA programs may operate under slightly different guidelines.

**What is the WIA program?** WIA is an acronym for the Workforce Investment Act. This legislation took effect in July 2000 replacing the old Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) programs and consolidating funding and activities from several other programs to be delivered through a network of SC Works Centers. The primary objective of WIA is to assist job seekers in obtaining employment.

**What can the WIA program do for me?** WIA offers a wide array of services to customers who may need a little more help in finding a job than what is available through the basic job listings and referral system provided by the Department of Employment and Workforce. WIA does not guarantee a job but pledges to assist customers in any way possible to guide them through their job search efforts. It is the ultimate responsibility of the job seeker to secure employment.

**What services does WIA provide?** The WIA program can offer a variety of services that are based upon the customer's goals. Services may include goal setting, career exploration, job referrals, counseling, budgeting, training, and supportive services.

**Who is eligible for WIA?** The WIA program serves individuals who are 18 years of age and older, unemployed, underemployed or who have lost their jobs due to plant closings or mass layoffs (also known as dislocated workers). WIA does give priority to serving individuals who fall into certain target groups such as high school dropouts, homeless persons and veterans. There are three levels of service under WIA such as core, intensive and training. Core services are services such as: independent job search, fax and copier machine use, etc. Intensive and Training services are services given to those persons enrolled in the WIA program with an assigned Workforce Specialist. Eligibility determination may be limited based on household income and the existence of significant barriers to employment.

**How do you get into the WIA program?** The initial step for individuals interested in the WIA program is to receive at least one basic or core service through any of our SC Works Trident Centers. Core services include registration for work, getting a job referral, filing an Unemployment Insurance Benefits claim, creating a resume in our resource room, or receiving any services from one of the many on-site partners in the centers. You will need to take the online orientation then complete and return the new customer questionnaire to a WIA staff member. You will be contacted by a WIA representative to be scheduled for an Eligibility appointment at a later date.

**How long does it take to get into the program?** The length of time may vary from person to person. It usually takes several weeks at a minimum from the point of eligibility certification to when an applicant is actually registered into the program because there are several steps involved in this process. You may be required to provide additional information before a final decision is made so a lot will depend on how quickly you respond to what is requested of you.

**Who decides which applicants are served by WIA?** Because WIA is a re-employment program, we are seeking to assist only those individuals who are serious about obtaining a job. Our continued funding depends upon the individual and the program mutually agreeing to achieve the same performance outcomes. In other words, the goal of someone wanting to participate in the WIA program has to be compatible with the goals of the program and on what WIA can provide to that individual. Therefore, both the WIA individual and staff decides based on the individual's goals and expectations.

**If I am certified as eligible am I guaranteed services by WIA?** WIA is not an entitlement program. WIA is an employment program seeking to assist only those individuals who are serious about obtaining a job. Our continued funding depends upon the individual and the program mutually agreeing to achieve the same performance outcomes. In other words, the goals of someone wanting to participate in the WIA program have to be compatible with the goals of the program and on what WIA can provide to that individual.

**Can WIA pay for training or classes?** Many of our customers seek financial assistance for training, but unlike its predecessor JTPA, the WIA program does not focus primarily on training. Our main mission is to help you in finding employment. If it is determined that you need to upgrade your skills in order to be competitive in the job market, then training may be considered as an option for you. We have to assess your current skill set and determine whether or not you can obtain employment. WIA is not an entitlement program. Just because an individual desires training does not necessarily mean that he or she is going to be deemed suitable for training. The primary purpose of WIA is not to retrain individuals who already possess marketable skills that will allow them to qualify for self-sufficient employment.

**How long do I have to participate in WIA?** Twenty-four months is the maximum length of time to be in a training program under WIA. Exceptions can be made under special circumstances. Our goal is to assist you in successfully obtaining employment in the shortest period of time possible. Some customers may only participate for a few months while others may be in the program for a longer period depending on whether or not they have been determined in need of training. Customers who are not actively participating for a 90-day period will automatically be transitioned out of the program, a process we refer to as "soft exiting". Once you agree to participate in the program, you must commit to cooperating fully with the WIA staff throughout the time you are receiving services and for up to one year after you exit the program. During this one-year follow-up period, you will be contacted at least once a quarter so that we may check up on your employment status and determine whether you need additional services from the program.

**Can WIA pay for an Associate, Bachelor or Master Degree program?** Our local area policy states that the maximum length of a training program cannot exceed 24 months. There are some circumstances where an Associates, Bachelors or Masters degree may be obtainable within this period and qualify for assistance from WIA. For further information regarding this subject, please ask to speak with someone from SC Works Center management team.

**Can WIA pay my bills for me?** Unlike organizations such as Shelter Net, Salvation Army, Charleston County Human Services, etc., WIA does not provide emergency payments for utilities, rent, telephone, or other bills. While WIA may have resources available to customers actively participating in the program, emergency needs that individuals may have for bills to be paid are not determining factors as to who is registered in the program or not. WIA also does not provide bus tickets or cab vouchers to customers seeking general services through the SC Works centers. Any forms of supportive services provided to WIA customers require budgeting and financial counseling from one of our representatives and are not an entitlement for participating.

**Why do I have to continue participating in the program once I find a job?** Once you are successful in finding a job, whether through our referrals or on your own, it is critical that you share this employment information with a representative from our staff. Since WIA is a performance driven program, we must report successes of our customers finding and retaining employment in order to continue receiving funds to operate and serve others. The majority of these performance outcomes are measured during the year after customers even though they have already obtained employment and no longer need our assistance.

**Can WIA guarantee a job for me?** Like any other similar service, WIA cannot guarantee anyone a job. We will commit to assisting you in any way possible in finding employment, but you, and only you, are ultimately responsible for getting the job. WIA can make a job referral, help you in preparing a resume, or coach you for the interview. However, you have to make the right impression with a perspective employer and sell yourself as the best candidate for them to hire.

**What are the qualifications for training?** Training is not an entitlement service under WIA. Approval for training is generally given to those individuals who do not have marketable job skills and are determined to be in need of training in order to be competitive in the job market. WIA funds can only be used for training in occupations where the jobs are available or showing growth in the region. Customers who are assessed as needing training may select from programs on the statewide eligible training providers list that fall under the training clusters in the SC Works Trident Region. There may also be restrictions placed on who can receive training services if available funding is limited.

**What classes does WIA offer?** WIA does not offer training classes itself. Instead the program may help to fund all or a portion of training programs that customers select from a list of eligible training vendors. These vendors may include technical colleges, Adult Education programs, truck driver training schools, and other institutions that provide training that will lead to employment in a stable or growing occupation.

**What does WIA pay if I also receive a Pell grant?** There is a limit to the amount of funding that may be paid for training so customers must demonstrate that they are able to afford the balance of the costs before a request for training can be considered. Customers are required to apply for resources from other sources of financial aid such as Pell grants, scholarships, or SC Education Lottery funds whenever these resources are available.

**What does it mean when I am “exited” from the program?** The term “exited” is used to describe the point at which WIA customers are transitioned out of the program and begin the one-year follow-up period where they will be contacted periodically to check on their progress and to obtain employment information that will be used in evaluating program performance measurements. The reasons that a customer may be exited include: employment and completion of all planned goals, no longer actively participating, incarceration, health or medical reasons that prohibit employment.

**Why was I released from the program?** WIA does not “release” customers from the program unless they have completed all of their goals and objectives, or they have remained inactive for more than 90 days. WIA is a performance-based program that must achieve contractual outcome measures in order to continue operations. There are strict guidelines placed on the staff in terms of providing services to customers. If a customer is not actively participating on at least a monthly basis then we may be forced to transition him or her out of the program.

**How can I get back into the program?** It is not the general practice of WIA to re-register individuals who have already transitioned out of the program. This is not allowed unless there were extenuating reasons why the customer left the program the first time. You are free to go back through the eligibility certification process to see if you still meet the requirements to participate, but the likelihood that you will be reconsidered is very low. WIA is a national and statewide program and therefore, the same considerations are applied even if you were a customer in another county of South Carolina or in another state. Likewise, prior participation in the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) or Economic Dislocation and Worker Adjustment Assistance Act (EDWAA) programs may lower an individual’s priority in being considered for WIA.

SC Works Trident Center Locations:

SC Works Charleston Center  
1930 Hanahan Road, Suite 200  
North Charleston, SC 29406  
(843) 574-1800

SC Works Berkeley Center  
100 South Highway 52  
Moncks Corner, SC 29461  
(843) 899-8736

SC Works Dorchester Center  
2885 West 5<sup>th</sup> North Street (Hwy 78)  
Summerville, SC 29483  
(843) 821-0695