

Empowering Individuals to Succeed Through Education and Workforce Training Act Rep. Adam Smith (WA-09)

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), there is currently no grant program dedicated solely to providing funds for wrap-around services for individuals pursuing workforce training and education programs. Individuals seeking workforce training or two-year education programs often face barriers beyond just tuition or the cost of the program. This is especially true for individuals from disadvantaged communities or those caring for their children or loved one. The financial burden of housing, child care, transportation, or other everyday needs presents significant challenges to pursuing or completing these programs.

The Empowering Individuals to Succeed Through Education and Workforce Training Act establishes a new competitive grant program under the WIOA dedicated exclusively to providing support services to individuals receiving education and workforce training.

A local workforce development board (“board”), a consortium of local boards, or a State board (in partnership with local boards) could apply to receive a grant from the Department of Labor. When applying for a grant, the local or State board would have to describe how they plan to partner with organizations or services providers to provide specific support services.

Individuals Eligible to Receive Support: Individuals participating in either WIOA Title I-funded training programs or Title II education programs are eligible to receive support services under this grant. These WIOA programs cover a range of training and education services such as:

- Occupational skills training and education;
- Pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships, and other on-the-job training;
- Skills upgrading and retraining;
- Adult education and literacy activities, such as English language or basic math classes.

Qualified Support Services: The scope of support services that could be provided under this grant is broad, designed to ensure that local boards can establish partnerships and provide support services to best meet the needs of the local area. It includes those defined under WIOA section 3(59), or other support services not covered under WIOA that are identified as important for an individual to complete their training services. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Assistance with transportation, child care or dependent care, and housing;
- Linkages to community services;
- Referrals to health care services;
- Assistance with uniforms or other appropriate work attire and related-tools, such as eye glasses and protective gear;
- Legal aid services.