

October 7, 2015

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FIELD INFORMATION MEMO NO: 15-10

TOPIC: WIOA Youth Experiential Learning Activities

1. **Purpose:** This guidance provides clarification regarding Experiential Learning activities as it relates to WIOA Youth programming and work opportunities.
2. **Background:** WIOA legislation places an increased emphasis on “work experience” opportunities to address youth unemployment challenges by connecting youth employment opportunities to academic and occupational education and to a career pathway. With this, regions must expend not less than 20% of youth allocated funds to provide in-school and out-of-school youth participants paid and unpaid work opportunities. Support services are not included towards the 20% expenditure rate.
3. **Substance:** Work experience opportunities are considered Experiential Learning activities and are designed to enable youth to gain exposure to the working world and its requirements. Such activities are the most important program elements within the WIOA Youth Program. These include: Job Shadowing (SHW), Work Experience (WEP), Internships (INT), On-the-Job Training (OJT) and Pre-Apprenticeship (PRE).

These opportunities assist youth to acquire the personal attributes, knowledge, and skills needed to obtain a job and advance in employment. Experiential Learning activities can serve as a stepping stone to unsubsidized employment and is an important step in the process of developing a career pathway for youth. Research shows work experience is correlated with increased high school graduation rates and success in the labor market. This is particularly important for youth with disabilities.

Experiential Learning activities may be viewed as using a stair step approach. Youth may be encouraged to follow a sequence of activities, as evidenced below, in order to explore career pathways and build upon successes; however following a sequence of Experiential Learning activities is not required. Each Experiential Learning activity requires the use of partnerships to develop a quality opportunity for both the youth participant and the business partner. For example, career planners may find it beneficial to work with the One-Stop business services team to identify an interested business partner to host a youth.

- I. **Job Shadow (SHW):** Job Shadows give participants an introduction into occupations and career fields. Participants have the opportunity in this activity to begin exploring different types of jobs which may assist them in further decisions regarding their future career choice. Of all the Experiential Learning activities, job shadows require the least amount of investment from the business as they are typically short-term.
- II. **Work Experience (WEP):** Work Experiences are utilized for participants who have no work experience or have lacked work opportunities. This activity helps

youth begin to form basic work habits such as showing up on time, and assists them in forming a work history. Although Work Experiences are temporary work assignments, it does require significant investment from the business.

- III. **Internships (INT):** Internships may be best suited for participants who have a specific career in mind, or if they have education or training relating to such field and could benefit from training within an actual work setting to enhance their employability. Like Work Experiences, Internships are temporary and require substantial investment from the business. Businesses who partner in internships are most successful when they act as mentors to the young person.
 - IV. **On-the-Job Training (OJT):** On-the-Job Trainings are most beneficial to participants who are prepared to enter the workforce long-term. OJT's are used to teach a participant specific skills and competencies to perform a specific job at a worksite where there may be a chance for advancement. The business is the employer of record in an OJT activity, meaning their investment in the OJT process is extensive. At the conclusion of an OJT, it is the expectation the business would continue employment with the participant. However, because the participant is an actual employee of the business, they have the right to terminate employment at any time.
 - V. **Pre-Apprenticeship (PRE):** Pre-apprenticeship's prepare individuals to enter and succeed in Registered Apprenticeship programs. They expand the participant's career pathway opportunities with industry-based training coupled with classroom instruction. Pre-apprenticeship supports participants in exploring a career while building literacy, math, English and work-readiness skills. Pre-Apprenticeships would be used for participants who are interested in advancing into a Registered Apprenticeship.
4. **Action:** Please distribute to WIOA Directors, Youth provider staff, Regional Workforce Development Board members, IWD Operations Managers, business services teams and other individuals with Youth program oversight and responsibility to ensure the guidance given regarding Experiential Learning is utilized in determining appropriate activities for youth participants, given the increased emphasis on these types of services under WIOA.
 5. **Effective Date:** Immediately.
 6. **Contact:** Direct any questions to Wendy Greenman at: wendy.greenman@iwd.iowa.gov or Kristi Judkins at: kristi.judkins@iwd.iowa.gov.



Beth Townsend, Director
Iowa Workforce Development