

Northwest Workforce Council

POLICY AND PROCEDURE DIRECTIVES

DATE ISSUED: **October 23, 2001**

SUBJECT: **Learning Incentive Payments**

REFERENCE #: **WIA 01-24**

BACKGROUND: With the increased awareness of the need for workers to have adequate basic skills, effective programs to assist those individuals who have educational deficiencies are a priority within any employment and training system. Western Washington University's evaluation, conducted by Dr. Carl Simpson, of the Council's programs indicated that outcomes for participants involved in remediation efforts were not as successful as for those participants for which remediation was not indicated. This finding highlights both the extent to which deficiencies in basic skills are a significant barrier to obtaining employment and the need to further improve both the delivery of basic education skills and incentives available to Council trainees to improve their skills.

That the prompt reinforcement of desired behaviors results in faster learning and higher levels of performance is a well established fact. For the non-disadvantaged student, this reinforcement for academic achievement is provided by the family, teachers and other figures recognized by the student as a source of rewards and self-esteem. In many instances, the family provides immediate rewards (money, a car or other presents) and self-esteem. Academic achievement for these individuals is also reinforced by the knowledge that longer-term rewards will be forthcoming, such as college, a good job or a career. Many times, for the economically or academically is advantaged student, these mechanisms for reward do not exist. College or a career is not perceived to be "in the cards" by these students and their families' financial situations preclude short term, rewards. Although there are many students who achieve satisfactory and even exceptional educational performance, large numbers do not and slip into a cycle leading to poorer performance and eventual withdrawal from the education environment.

Compounding this problem is the need for economically disadvantaged individuals to earn money. An abundance of low pay, entry level, if dead-end, jobs are available in the labor market to individuals - especially youth. These opportunities satisfy immediate needs but in many cases do not provide for long-term work security.

To compensate for the lack of systematic reinforcement of academic achievement in the at-risk disadvantaged population, a fixed unit monetary reward for competency achievement will be instituted. In providing basic skills remediation to this disadvantaged population, reinforcement in the form of a monetary reward for achievement is a desirable, if not necessary, program service for the rapid and lasting acquisition of basic skills competencies.

ELIGIBILITY: Youth and Adult participants enrolled in a basic skills training activity who are NOT being compensated for their time in that educational activity as a part of their training plan.

BENCHMARKS TO BE ACHIEVED DURING PROGRAM PARTICIPATION:

- 1) Achievement of 10th grade skill levels in mathematics, reading comprehension, and language comprehension measured appropriate testing instruments.
- 2) For youth in secondary school: the achievement of class level credit standing, when shown to have been credit deficient by school records, and grade level performance in math or reading as measured by post-testing, when shown to have been grade level deficient on a pre-test.
- 3) Achievement of a High School Diploma or its equivalent as a primary result of being enrolled in a WIA assisted basic skills program.

PAYMENT INCREMENT STANDARDS:

- 1) Payment increments shall be every half (.5) high school credit earned as a result of basic skills training at a rate of \$50.00 for each increment.
- 2) Every grade gain, or its equivalency, above the 4th grade level in basic skills as measured by pre- and post-tests and other educational documentation at a rate of \$50.00 for each grade gain through Grade Nine (9).
- 3) A final reinforcement payment, \$100.00, upon attainment of each or any benchmark: 10th grade competency, diploma or GED, and, for in school youth, grade level and credit standing.
- 4) In lieu of cash payments for welfare recipients, the option of providing gift certificates in an equal amount for achieving increments and/or benchmarks may be made to avoid grant reduction penalties.

REQUIRED SERVICE CONTRACT:

To receive Learning Incentive Payment(s), a Basic Skills Service Agreement must be completed and contain:

- 1) Grade level (pre-test scores on survey or diagnostic tests) and, for any in-school youth, credit standing, described;
- 2) the Benchmarks to be achieved;
- 3) all possible payment increment points;
- 4) the start and end dates of current program, educational goals, class schedule, etc.
- 5) the total amount of incentive payments that could be earned during the term of the agreement; and
- 6) The signatures of the participant, their coordinator, the basic skills instructor who will be providing the services and, when appropriate, the student's school counselor.

INCENTIVE REWARDS:

Payments for increments and Benchmarks achieved will be paid as Service Agreement copies are submitted to the Area Manager with:

- 1) attainments recorded, and
- 2) verified by original Instructor and Student signatures with the Coordinator's signature and date,
- 3) with documentation of gains by post-test score report (Survey or Diagnostic) and/or transcript/grade report;
- 4) the Area Manager reviews packet for completeness and signs off on the Service Agreement;
- 5) the packet is submitted to the Fiscal Department for payment by direct check or by gift certificate for those participants whose other financial assistance would be adversely effected by a cash payment.