Operational Policy NO. OP- 406 Change 1

Subject: Assessments
Effective: PY26 – 10/19/2026

BACKGROUND:

Assessments are an integral part of WCCNM's delivery of career services under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Career services include, 1) Basic Career Services, 2) Individualized Career Services, and 3) Follow-up Services, as applicable to the participant's needs and program requirements.

Assessments support career planning, identification of participant needs, and selection of appropriate services. Assessments are a holistic, ongoing process and should not be viewed as a one-time event. Assessment results shall be reviewed with the participant and used to identify appropriate employment goals, action steps, career services, and follow-up services based on the participant's individual needs.

From the information compiled during assessments, appropriate WCCNM One-Stop partners and services should be identified to facilitate appropriate referrals and connections to supportive services needed to succeed in career pathway development and sustainable employment.

POLICY:

Service providers shall be responsible for determining the appropriate assessment tools as applicable to the individual and ensure staff are trained in program participant eligibility and assessment procedures.

Initial Assessment

Initial assessment activities are conducted as part of the intake and career service process to identify an individual's employment goals, strengths, service needs, and potential barriers to employment. These activities may include informal interviews, discussions with the participant, and coordination with appropriate One-Stop partners to identify services and referrals.

The initial assessment should consider, as applicable:

- Participant strengths and workplace skills.
- Career interests and work values.
- Prior work history.
- Family circumstances relevant to employment and service needs.
- Basic skills.

- Potential barriers to employment.
- Supportive service and referral needs.

Objective Assessment

Objective assessment involves a more comprehensive evaluation of a participant's skills, abilities, interests, and service needs. The assessment may include formal assessment instruments, review of existing records, interviews, and other appropriate methods.

Assessment areas may include:

- Skills gaps and existing strengths.
- Workplace and occupational skills.
- Career interests, aptitudes, and work values.
- Prior work history.
- Educational and training needs.
- Basic skills and digital literacy.
- Financial circumstances and supportive service needs.
- Potential barriers to employment.
- Other factors relevant to the participant's employment goals.

A note on standardized tests:

When a service provider uses a standardized assessment instrument to determine basic skills deficiency, the instrument must be valid and appropriate for the target population. Reasonable accommodations must be provided during the assessment process, when necessary, for individuals with disabilities.

When standardized testing is used to assess basic skills, the assessment must evaluate relevant reading, writing, or computing skills. Deficiencies in soft skills or job-specific occupational skills alone shall not be used to establish basic skills deficiency.

Occupational assessment instruments, including Prove-It, generally shall not be used to establish basic skills deficiency when they measure job-specific occupational skills rather than the basic skills relevant to the determination. Computer literacy may be considered consistent with NMDWS Policy 20-002, Change 3, and applicable local policy.

Basic Skills Deficient

An individual who is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English, at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society. This may also include lack of computer literacy, consistent with NMDWS Policy 20-002, Change 3.

Pursuant to 20 CFR § 681.290, an individual is considered basic skills deficient for WIOA Youth Program purposes if the individual:

1. Has English reading, writing, or computing skills at or below the eighth-grade level on a generally accepted standardized test; or
2. Is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society.

For Adult and Dislocated Worker participants, staff shall apply the applicable federal and State criteria for identifying and documenting basic skills deficiency.

Documentation of Basic Skills Deficiency

Staff shall document basic skills deficiency using one of the following methods identified in NMDWS Policy 20-002, Change 3:

- Basic skills assessment questions or test results.
- School records.
- Referral or records from a Title II Adult Basic Education program.
- Referral or records from an English Language Learner program.

The participant's file must contain documentation supporting the determination. Staff shall record the assessment method or source used and ensure that the information supports the data entered into the participant's record. Any additional documentation requirements must be consistent with applicable federal, State, and local policy.

Youth Co-Enrollment in the WIOA Adult Program

A youth participant between the ages of 18 and 24 who was determined to be basic skills deficient under the WIOA Youth Program may be co-enrolled in the WIOA Adult Program without an eligibility redetermination and counted as an individual who meets Adult priority-of-service criteria, provided the original determination was made no more than six months before the date of co-enrollment, consistent with NMDWS Policy 20-002, Change 3.

Staff shall verify and document the date of the original determination and the date of co-enrollment to establish that the six-month requirement is met.

Priority Populations

Consistent with WIOA and applicable federal and State guidance, priority for individualized career services and training services funded through the WIOA Adult Program shall be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient.

Based on the WIOA application and supporting documentation, staff shall ensure that applicable priority-of-service categories are accurately identified and documented in the NM Jobs system in accordance with current NMDWS policy and WCCNM procedures. System-generated classifications shall be reviewed and corrected when necessary to ensure consistency with the supporting documentation.

Assessment Process

Assessments shall be client-centered and diagnostic in nature. Staff shall evaluate participant strengths, needs, and potential barriers to employment, considering family circumstances, work history, education, occupational skills, interests, aptitudes (including those related to nontraditional occupations), attitude toward work, motivation, behavior patterns affecting employment potential, financial resources, supportive service needs, local labor market conditions, and other relevant information necessary to prepare the participant for meaningful employment.

For Youth participants, assessments must identify each participant's academic levels and service needs and, at a minimum, include a review of basic and/or occupational skills, prior work experience, work and career interests and aptitudes (including interests and aptitudes for nontraditional occupations), supportive service needs, and developmental needs.

A new assessment of a Youth participant is not required when the service provider determines that a recent assessment conducted through another education or training program is appropriate for the participant's current needs.

For Adult and Dislocated Worker participants, assessment results shall inform the development or updating of the Individual Employment Plan (IEP), as applicable.

For Youth participants, assessment results shall inform the development or updating of the Individual Service Strategy (ISS), as applicable.

APPLICABILITY:

All WCCNM service providers.

INQUIRIES:

WIOA Manager 505-724-3629

Should you require a signed copy of this policy, please email Tawnya Rowland at trowland@mrcog-nm.gov

Approval:

This Policy has received approval by the Workforce Connection of Central New Mexico Executive Standing Committee and or Full Board and rescinds any policy previously in effect.