

What is Adult Priority of Service?

In November 2020, the Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration (ETA) published [Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) 07-20, Effective Implementation of Priority of Service Provisions for Most in Need Individuals in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act \(WIOA\) Adult Program](#). This guidance conveys ETA’s vision of the statutorily required priority of service provisions in the WIOA Adult Program. Adult Priority of Service is a vital tool in implementing WIOA’s goal of “increasing access to and opportunities for the employment, education, training, and supportive services for individuals, particularly those with barriers to employment.” It is also required in statute; WIOA section 134(c)(3)(E) (related regulation [20 CFR 680.800](#)) requires that American Job Center (AJC) staff, when using WIOA Adult Program funds to provide individualized career and training services, must give priority of service to:

- **Recipients of public assistance,**
- **low-income individuals,**
- **and individuals who are basic skills deficient (including English language learners).**

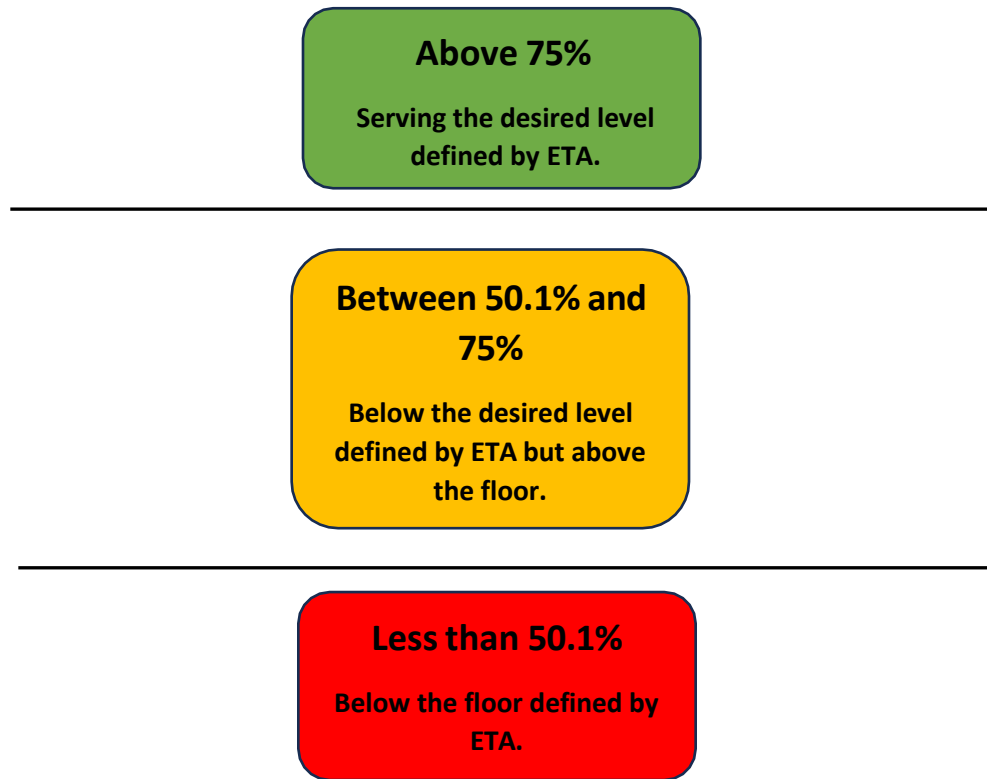
This Adult Program priority of service requirement **does not** supersede or replace the veterans’ priority of service requirement. Veterans and eligible spouses continue to receive priority of service for all DOL-funded job training programs, including the WIOA Adult Program. States and local areas must apply priority of service to WIOA Adult Program participants in the order below:

1. First, to veterans and eligible spouses (who also are included in the groups given statutory priority for WIOA adult formula funds). This means that veterans and eligible spouses who also are recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, or individuals who are basic skills deficient would receive first priority for services provided with WIOA adult formula funds.
2. Second, to non-covered persons (individuals who are not veterans or eligible spouses) who are included in the groups given priority for WIOA adult formula funds.
3. Third, to veterans and eligible spouses who are not included in WIOA’s priority groups.
4. Fourth, to any other populations identified by the Governor or Local Workforce Development Board for priority.
5. Last, to non-covered persons outside the groups given priority under WIOA. Additional information regarding these priority of service requirements is available in the [WIOA Desk Reference: Priority of Service for WIOA Adult Funds](#).

In [TEGL 07-20](#), ETA envisions that giving priority of service to these individuals means ensuring that at least 75 percent of a state’s participants receiving individualized career and training services in the WIOA Adult Program are from at least one of the priority groups (are recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, or individuals who are basic skills deficient) and expects this rate will be no lower than 50.1 percent in any state.



Promising Practices for Implementing Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Adult Priority of Service Provision



States must include information in their WIOA State Plan regarding how they implement and monitor priority of service provision in the Adult Program. ETA uses performance data submitted by states to assess states' progress in implementing the Adult priority of service requirement. Additional information regarding how states report Adult priority of service data is available in the [Performance Reporting for WIOA Adult Priority Populations Desk Reference](#).

ETA's goal is to ensure all states are meeting the 75 percent goal, and the ETA national office is working with regional offices to provide technical assistance to those states that have not yet reached that service level. ETA is also working with regions and states to identify promising practices from states and local areas that are meeting or exceeding the 75 percent goal and/or have shown the most improvement over several quarters.

What can states do to increase their service levels?

ETA used information from states that have successfully enrolled and met the Adult Program priority population target to identify practices that appear to facilitate such enrollment. States should review and adapt or adopt these practices to increase services to individuals who are recipients of public assistance, low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient (including English language learners).



August 2023

Promising Practices for Implementing Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Adult Priority of Service Provision

Promising Practice #1: Develop state and local policy aligned to ETA's Adult Priority of Service guidance.

State Example: In response to [TEGL-07-20](#) guidance, the state of Maryland issued [Policy Issuance 2021-13](#), which provides comprehensive policy guidance stating Maryland is committed to ensuring its target populations can access the WIOA system on a priority basis. This guidance was shared with all Maryland Department of Labor Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning staff and Local Workforce Development Area Directors.

Maryland's policy lists target populations, such as youth aged out of foster care and single parents, that are eligible for Adult Priority of Service coverage. These target populations were identified in accordance with Maryland's WIOA State and Local plans and mirror the state's demographics. This policy directive also clearly states the order in which priority must be given, indicating expectations for all relevant stakeholders. Finally, Maryland's policy lists ETA's 75 percent goal as the statewide service goal, which has allowed local areas to align their goals with ETA. All policies are collaborative, with feedback and input from state, local, program, and community organizations.

As outlined in [TEGL 07-20](#), states and local areas should define Adult Priority of Service requirements within their own context and then write clear policies outlining what priority of service means and how it should be integrated into the program recruitment and enrollment process performed locally. Clearly articulating the state's Adult Priority of Service priorities allows local areas to align with service requirements.

States should ensure no state or local policies contradict priority of service requirements or create challenges for front line staff to identify and serve priority populations. A first step for states who need to enhance service delivery for priority populations is to assess state policies and ensure they are updated and reflective of [TEGL 07-20's](#) priorities. This may include reviewing enrollment practices. For example, if states have automatic co-enrollment or other automatically triggered enrollment processes, it may be helpful for them to integrate priority of service requirements into those processes. If not, automatically enrolled individuals may be mis-classified and not included in Adult Priority of Service numbers.



August 2023

Promising Practices for Implementing Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Adult Priority of Service Provision

Promising Practice #2: Align intake procedures with Adult Priority of Service requirements.

State Example: Idaho Department of Labor developed an income system to assess participants for possible identification as an Adult program priority population. Prior to customer enrollment and career coach assignment, Idaho completes a quality assurance check to ensure that the assessment was correct and included any required documents. As a note, this process is separate from eligibility, and **no assessments should preclude eligible participants from receiving services.**

Similarly, Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development uses a prescreening tool to assist front-line staff in identifying whether an individual fits within the priority of service groups.

At intake, AJC staff determine an individual's eligibility for services, including any supportive services to help them achieve their workforce goals. Front-line staff must ask the correct questions during intake to determine whether an individual is from one of the priority populations, as well as to ensure participants are referred to partner programs based on their needs. Equally important, staff must accurately report the data collected from a customer in the system for approval. AJC staff may benefit from an enrollment checklist to ensure all participants are appropriately screened.

Promising Practice #3: Train staff at all levels on the Adult Priority of Service requirements.

A successful approach to priority of service must include ongoing staff training, particularly for front-line

State Example: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development holds a monthly case management meeting with workforce system regional managers and supervisors, and a dedicated portion of that meeting includes reminders about priority of service requirements. Further, staff is encouraged to share any priority of service updates or reminders with their front-line staff.

staff who may have high turnover. Front-line staff training should include an onboarding checklist that indicates what priority of service means; how to ask the necessary questions to ascertain priority of service status; the difference between eligibility and priority of service; and correct data validation and entry procedures. The state should also develop a system for reminding regional managers and supervisors about the priority of service requirements, as well as a forum for discussion about any barriers to reaching the priority of service goals.



August 2023

Promising Practices for Implementing Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Adult Priority of Service Provision

Promising Practice #4: Create and leverage partnerships with organizations that serve individuals in priority groups.

Successful priority of service policies include partnerships with WIOA Adult core partners as well as partner agencies and nonprofits that serve individuals that are low income, receive public assistance, or are basic skills deficient; this includes purposeful participant co-enrollment between programs. WIOA

State Example: In Alaska, WIOA staff partners with adult education grantees, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and other community agencies and organizations to increase referrals of priority populations. Alaska's Department of Labor & Workforce Development and Department of Health also collaborated to create an improved referral system between departments to identify TANF recipients who could benefit from career services.

Maryland Department of Labor Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning partners with TANF providers to ensure referrals from TANF to WIOA programs; the state leverages WIOA, TANF, Vocational Rehabilitation, and other programs' co-location in AJCs to quickly refer individuals across programs. Further, community liaisons conduct outreach with community groups across the state to better engage with underserved populations. Finally, Maryland developed a pipeline from prisons into workforce programs via its reentry navigator program; often, individuals from the prison system may be members of a priority population group.

core partners include Title I WIOA programs (including Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs), Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act programs, Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation programs, and Wagner-Peyser Employment Services. These core programs should regularly engage in discussion to ensure co-enrollment and data sharing when possible. Review your co-enrollment practices among the WIOA Adult Program and individuals participating in Adult Education and Vocational Rehabilitation programs, as well as recipients of public assistance benefits such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).¹ Participants enrolled in these programs often fit the characteristics of the WIOA Adult priority groups. For instance, individuals enrolled in Title II Adult Education programs may be considered basic skills deficient and can be considered for Adult Priority of Service. Co-enrollment not only better serves the individual but also ensures the state is reaching priority of service required goals.

Engage with other required partners to connect individuals with the holistic services they need for success. Many community-based organizations throughout states and local areas

serve populations identified in the Adult Program priority of service requirements. Local workforce boards may choose to partner with these organizations to better reach those individuals.

¹ [20 CFR 678.400](#)

