

IowaWORKS CENTER CERTIFICATION PROCESS GUIDANCE

Context and Purpose

One-Stop certification is a process that sets standard expectations for a minimum level of quality and consistency of customer-focused services provided by partners in the Iowa workforce delivery system in and through One-Stop Career Centers (called IowaWORKS Centers) across the state.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires that the State Workforce Development Board (State Board or SWDB), in consultation with chief elected officials and Local Workforce Development Boards (Local Board or LWDB), must establish objective criteria and procedures for local boards to use when certifying One-Stop Career Centers. The State Board must review and update the criteria every two years as part of the State Plan review and modification process, and the criteria must be consistent with the Governor's and State Board's guidelines, guidance, and policies on infrastructure funding decisions. Local Boards must assess and certify their comprehensive and affiliate Centers at least once every three years.

Certification authority: LWDBs have the authority and responsibility to certify comprehensive and affiliated Centers in their local areas. Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) will review LWDBs' compliance with Center certification requirements as part of the agency's oversight, compliance, and monitoring roles. Failure to certify comprehensive and affiliated Centers in accordance with established policy and timelines could result in monitoring findings for LWDBs. As described in 20 CFR 678.800, LWDBs must certify Centers in order to be eligible to use infrastructure funds in the state funding mechanism described in 20 CFR 678.730.

Local Boards may establish additional criteria, or set higher standards for service coordination, than those established by the State Board. If they choose to do so, Local Boards must review and update these additional criteria every two years as part of the Local Plan review and modification process.

Definitions and Types of One-Stop Centers

Types of One-Stop Centers

The Iowa SWDB has adopted the following definitions for IowaWORKS Centers:

Comprehensive Center

Titles I and III are present full time with one other core partner present at least part time, and center provides access to all programs, services, and activities of partners not located in the center.

As required by [USDOL-ETA's Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) No. 16-16](#), "One-Stop Operations Guidance for the American Job Center Network," a local area must have at least one physical comprehensive One-Stop center.

Affiliated Center

Two or more core partners are present with at least one of the core partners present on a full-time basis.

Satellite Center

Any location where one core or required partner is present on a permanent basis. Title I and Title III are not eligible to have stand-alone offices or be satellite centers.

Certification is required for comprehensive and affiliate centers. It is not required for satellite centers.

Certification Criteria

One-Stop certification standards set expectations for a minimum level of quality and consistency across three primary areas: physical and programmatic accessibility, effectiveness, and continuous improvement. Iowa's certification standards in these three areas were developed by the WIOA Titles I-IV Core Partners, in consultation with local partner representatives who participated in the development process, from January-October 2021. The standards were presented to the SWDB at the November 2021 meeting of the Board and were voted on and approved by the Board at its January 2022 meeting.

In the first half of 2022, WIOA Core Partners, with local partner representatives, collaborated to develop this certification process guidance, as well as related tools and training, to support official launch of the certification process for IowaWORKS Centers on October 1, 2022.

Physical and Programmatic Accessibility

The Physical and Programmatic Accessibility standards align with the One-Stop certification requirements described at [20 CFR 678.800](#) (as well as [34 CFR 361.800](#) and [34 CFR 463.800](#)) and in [USDOL-ETA's Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) No. 16-16](#), "One-Stop Operations Guidance for the American Job Center Network." Per these requirements, certification standards related to physical and programmatic accessibility must include evaluations of how well the center ensures equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities to participate in or benefit from center services. Evaluations must include criteria evaluating how well the centers and delivery systems take actions to comply with the disability-related regulations implementing [WIOA sec. 188](#), set forth at [29 CFR part 38](#), including:

- Providing reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities;
- Making reasonable modifications to policies, practices, and procedures where necessary to avoid discrimination against persons with disabilities;

- Administering programs in the most integrated setting appropriate;
- Communicating with persons with disabilities as effectively as with others;
- Providing appropriate auxiliary aids and services, including assistive technology devices and services, where necessary to afford individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in, and enjoy the benefits of, the program or activity; and
- Providing for the physical accessibility of the center to individuals with disabilities.

The Physical and Programmatic Accessibility certification standards also address center program, service, and resource accessibility for individuals whose first language is not English and individuals with lower literacy levels.

Effectiveness

The Effectiveness standards align with the One-Stop certification requirements described at [20 CFR 678.800](#) (as well as [34 CFR 361.800](#) and [34 CFR 463.800](#)) and in [USDOL-ETA's Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) No. 16-16](#), "One-Stop Operations Guidance for the American Job Center Network." Per these requirements, certification standards related to effectiveness must include evaluations of how well the center:

- Integrates available services for participants and businesses.
- Meets the workforce development needs of participants and the employment needs of local employers.
- Operates in a cost-efficient manner.
- Coordinates services among the One-Stop partner programs.
- Provides access to partner program services to the maximum extent practicable; and
- Takes feedback from One-Stop customers into account in evaluation of the elements above.

Continuous Improvement

The Continuous Improvement standards align with the One-Stop certification requirements described at [20 CFR 678.800](#) (as well as [34 CFR 361.800](#) and [34 CFR 463.800](#)) and in [USDOL-ETA's Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) No. 16-16](#), "One-Stop Operations Guidance for the American Job Center Network." Per these requirements, certification standards related to continuous improvement include evaluations of how well the center:

- Supports the achievement of the negotiated local levels of performance for the indicators of performance for the local area;
- Establishes a regular process for identifying and responding to technical assistance needs;
- Establishes a regular system for continuing staff professional development; and
- Has systems in place to capture and respond to specific customer feedback.

Continuous improvement, in the context of the public workforce system, is the ongoing assessment and improvement of services and processes to achieve maximum benefit and value for the customer. To continually improve the system, decision makers must have data that provides insight into center performance relative to local area-wide performance targets; staff support, technical assistance, and training needs; and customer experience of the service process and results. One-stop certification standards require not just that this data is collected and analyzed, but also that it is actively and ongoingly used to improve and enhance decisions and investments, system coordination, processes and operations, and service delivery.

Types of Certification

Three types of certification may be awarded from the One-Stop Center certification review team:

- ▶ Full Certification
- ▶ Provisional Certification
- ▶ Not Certified / Decertified

Self-Assessment Process and Center Evaluation Teams

Self-Assessment Process

The self-assessment process offers local areas the opportunity to identify potential needs for technical assistance and areas for improvement prior to the center certification evaluation. All comprehensive and affiliate centers are required to complete a self-assessment as part of the center certification process. Local areas are encouraged to complete the self-assessment process at least six months prior to the center evaluation. Local board staff are encouraged to participate as members of the self-assessment team.

All five local core partner programs (Titles I-IV partners, including both Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services [IVRS] and Iowa Department for the Blind [IDB] partners for Title IV) must be represented as members of either the self-assessment team or the center evaluation team.

Certification Evaluation Team

The local board is responsible for forming the certification evaluation team. Teams must include an odd number of members. The certification evaluation team must include a minimum of three members including at least one business member from the board. A representative from each of the core partner programs (Title I, Title II, Title III, Title IV - IVRS, and Title IV - IDB) must participate as either a member of the self-assessment team or of the certification evaluation team. Local areas may add additional members to the evaluation team, such as additional Board members, One-Stop required/Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) partners, or customers. Evaluation teams must not include co-located partner staff in the center being reviewed or any local area board staff members.

Core partner program representatives who are not evaluation team members should be available to consult with the team related to areas of the center review requiring their subject matter expertise. The local board is responsible for voting to approve the certification results.

Certification Procedures

Certification Frequency

- Full certification: Three years
- Provisional certification: Not to exceed one year

LWDBs must ensure that centers that are new or have re-located complete the center certification process, including evaluation and submission of documents to IWD, within 90 days of opening to the public for services.

Evaluation Timeline and Process Notes

Deadlines for the first round of certification: The initial period for centers to become certified is October 1, 2022-September 30, 2023.

Scoring Approach

Each of the three certification categories has a set of required (yes/no) standards. Each evaluation team member will individually determine if a standard has been met. The final determination for each category will be based on the number of standards successfully achieved. The evaluation team must reach a consensus on the category decision for determination of certification status. For example, if two evaluation team members determine that a center has achieved full certification in a particular category and the third team member assesses the center as provisional in that category, the three members will need to discuss their determinations and come to a final, consensus decision certification status for the category.

Physical and Programmatic Accessibility

- Comprehensive Centers (9 standards total)
 - Full certification – successful achievement of 8 or more standards
 - Provisional certification – successful achievement of 5-7 standards
 - Not certified – 4 or fewer standards successfully achieved
- Affiliate Centers (9 standards total)
 - Full certification – successful achievement of 8 or more standards
 - Provisional certification – successful achievement of 5-7 standards
 - Not certified – 4 or fewer standards successfully achieved

Effectiveness

- Comprehensive Centers (14 standards total)
 - Full certification – successful achievement of 12 or more standards
 - Provisional certification – successful achievement of 9-11 standards
 - Not certified – 8 or fewer standards successfully achieved
- Affiliate Centers (13 standards total)
 - Full certification – successful achievement of 11 or more standards
 - Provisional certification – successful achievement of 8-10 standards
 - Not certified – 7 or fewer standards successfully achieved

Continuous Improvement

- Comprehensive Centers (9 standards total)
 - Full certification – successful achievement of 8 or more standards
 - Provisional certification – successful achievement of 5-7 standards
 - Not certified – 4 or fewer standards successfully achieved
- Affiliate Centers (9 standards total)
 - Full certification – successful achievement of 8 or more standards
 - Provisional certification – successful achievement of 5-7 standards
 - Not certified – 4 or fewer standards successfully achieved

Certification Determination

Full Certification: Full certification requirements have been met for each of the three categories as determined by the evaluation team.

Provisional Certification: A combination of full, provisional, and/or not certified requirements have been met across the three categories as determined by the evaluation team.

Not Certified: Evaluation of each of the three categories results in a not certified outcome as determined by the evaluation team.

The certification team will provide a final recommendation with comments related to best practices and areas of concern. If the recommendation is provisional certification or not certified, the team must clearly describe the specific issues identified for corrective action. The certification team's documentation must include evaluation forms completed by each team member. Certification decisions are expected to be unanimous, reached by discussion and consensus among evaluation team members.

A center that has received a provisional certification must be re-evaluated within six months of the initial review. At the six-month review, a decision can be made to remain provisionally certified for no more than an additional six months or to fully certify or de-certify the center. The local area is encouraged to re-evaluate a provisionally certified center as soon as the issues identified by the review team have been resolved.

If a center is not certified or is de-certified, a three-month corrective action plan to either achieve provisional certification or to close/transition services to another center location must be submitted to the SWDB. The center must then achieve full certification within six months of being not certified/decertified. State core partners will be available to consult on corrective action and provide technical assistance throughout this six-month period.

Timeline

October 1, 2022

- Official launch of the certification system

October 1, 2022-September 30, 2023

- LWDBs certify their comprehensive and affiliated centers (initial round of certification)

Late Winter-Early Spring 2024

- SWDB updates certification system as part of the WIOA State Plan review and modification process (the SWDB must review and update certification criteria every two years)

July 1, 2025-September 30, 2025

- Centers conduct self-assessment to prepare for second round of certification (particularly important if the SWDB has changed or updated the certification standards, but valuable even if not)

October 1, 2025-September 30, 2026

- LWDBs certify their comprehensive and affiliate centers (certification reassessment and renewal)

List of Supporting Documents

- Self-Assessment Tool (for self-assessment reviews)
- Evaluation Tool (for certification review team members)
- Certification Determination Summary Template