



### Objective Assessment – OBA

#### Effective Date

4/22/2021, Revisions 5/8/2024, 11/13/2024, 2/2/2026, 3/2/2026

#### Purpose

The Northeast Iowa Workforce Development Board provides this guidance on the assessment practices that are utilized by the Iowa **WORKS** one-stop centers in the assessments of WIOA participants.

#### Background

The goal of WIOA is to align services, establish consistency with WIOA partners and to promote program collaboration within the Iowa **WORKS** system creating greater efficiency in utilizing existing assessment processes while decreasing duplication of services within the WIOA partner system.

NEIWDB will follow ePolicy for Youth Objective Assessment (OBA) service:

<https://epolicy.iwd.iowa.gov/Policy/Index?id=179&Version=2>

NEIWDB will follow ePolicy for Adult and Dislocated Worker Objective Assessment (OBA) service:

<https://epolicy.iwd.iowa.gov/Policy/Index?id=144&Version=2>

#### Policy

An objective assessment (*OBA*) is an initial service activity to be provided to each Title I participant per section 129(c)(1)(A) of WIOA. The objective assessment process collects information upon which a participant's Individual Employment Plan (IEP) or Individual Service Strategy (ISS) will be based. Objective assessment is the mutual exchange of ideas and opinions, discussion and deliberation which includes an examination of the capabilities, needs, and vocational goals of a participant. Objective assessments include a review of the academic and occupational skill levels, as well as the service needs and strengths, of each participant for the purpose of identifying appropriate services and career pathways for participants and creating the IEP or ISS.

All of the information gathered for the purpose of developing the OBA must be included in the Objective Assessment document located in Iowa **WORKS**. Once the OBA is complete, the IEP/ISS should be developed, and updated as needed, based on the needs of each participant that is directly linked to one or more indicators of performance described in WIOA sec. 116(b)(2)(A)(ii).

An OBA is a procedure designed to comprehensively assess the skills, abilities, experience, aptitudes, strengths, and interests of each employment and training participant using diagnostic testing and other assessment tools. Objective assessment may be completed using any combination of the following:

- Structured interviews



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- Skills and aptitude assessments
- Performance assessments
- Interest and/or attitude inventories
- Career guidance instruments
- Aptitude tests
- Basic skills tests

The Assessment process must utilize generally accepted methodologies and instruments to collect information on each of the following factors for each participant:

- a. Family situation
- b. Work history
- c. Education
- d. Basic literacy skills
- e. Occupational skills
- f. Work readiness skills
- g. Interests and aptitudes
- h. Attitude and motivation
- i. Financial resources
- j. Basic needs
- k. Review of strengths

For Youth, the assessment shall include a review of the following:

- a. Basic skills
- b. Occupational skills
- c. Prior work experience
- d. Employability
- e. Interests
- f. Aptitudes
- g. Support service needs
- h. Strengths (rather than just focusing on the areas that need improvement); and
- i. Developmental needs of participant, for the purposes of identifying appropriate services and career pathways for participants.

Assessments may include interviews, observations, TABE, and/or CASAS, NCRC as well as an in-depth review of work and educational history. These assessments are approved for use by the National Reporting System and the NEIWDB.

- The assessment must be thorough enough for the career planner and participant to develop an appropriate IEP/ISS.

The following assessments will be utilized as part of the Objective Assessment Process: TABE, CASAS, Aleks, Career Coach, NCRC, O\*Net Interest Profiler, CAPS/COPS/COPES. Assessment tools are evaluated



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on an ongoing basis by the Title I Service provider. The selection/addition of actual instruments will occur throughout the course of enrollment.

### Basic Skills Assessment Requirements:

After the completion of the Objective Assessment, career planners may assess participants for Basic Skills Deficiency (BSD) before the completion of the IEP/ISS.

In assessing basic skills, local programs must:

- Use assessment instruments that are valid and appropriate for the target population; and
- Provide reasonable accommodation in the assessment process, if necessary, for individuals with disabilities.

For purposes of the basic skills assessment portion of the OBA, local programs are not required to use assessments approved for use in the Department of Education's National Reporting System (NRS), nor are they required to determine an individual's grade level equivalent or educational functioning level (EFL), although use of these tools is permitted.

Rather, local programs may use other formalized testing instruments designed to measure skills-related gains. It is important that, in addition to being valid and reliable, any formalized testing used to be appropriate, fair, cost effective, well-matched to the test administrator's qualifications, and easy to administer and interpret results.

Alternatively, skills related gains may also be determined through less formal alternative assessment techniques such as observation, folder reviews, or interviews. The latter may be particularly appropriate for youth with disabilities given accessibility issues related to formalized instruments.

*In contrast to the initial assessment during basic career services*, if measuring EFL gains after program enrollment under the measurable skill gains indicator, local programs must use an NRS-approved assessment for both the EFL pre- and post-test to determine an individual's educational functioning level.

Previous basic skills assessments that have been conducted within the past six months may be used if available. This may include assessments completed by a secondary school, Vocational Rehabilitation, Adult Basic and Literacy Education, or other education or training providers.

### Basic Skills Assessment Tools:

The career planner can utilize TABE and/or CASAS when testing the participant for Basic Skills. The results of the assessments must be addressed in the IEP/ISS, this is important if participants are assessed as having basic skill deficiencies and require remediation. This may be conducted with our WIOA Title II Adult Education and Literacy partners. The use of ALEKS can also be used to determine basic skills when interested in post-secondary education.

### Reasonable Accommodations:



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Under Section 188 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and related regulations, providers must provide reasonable accommodation to qualified individuals with disabilities, unless providing the accommodation would cause undue hardship.

No qualified individual with a disability may be excluded from participation in, or be denied the benefits of a recipient's service, program, or activity or be subjected to discrimination by any recipient because a recipient's facilities are inaccessible or unusable by individuals with disabilities.

### Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination Statement:

All Recipients, and Sub recipients/Sub grantees must comply with WIOA's Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination provisions which prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin (including limited English proficiency), age, disability, political affiliation or belief, or, for beneficiaries, applicants, and participants only, on the basis of citizenship status or participation in a WIOA Title-I financially assisted program or activity.

### Assessment Interpretation:

- Workforce Consultants should become familiar with the types of assessments administered to customers and should have an understanding of the results and what they mean.
- Workforce Consultants use the Objective Assessment in the development of the Individual Service Strategy (ISS) or the Individual Employment Plan (IEP).
- Workforce Consultants are required to explain the assessment results with the customer in a meaningful way, rather than just briefly covering the data or numbers.
- Workforce Consultants should not only explain assessment results but also relate them to the customer's specific goals, barriers, and strengths. This approach helps customers understand how the results align with their career and training plans, making the data actionable and relevant.
- Consultants should use the assessment outcomes to collaborate with the customer on setting realistic, attainable goals within the ISS or IEP. This process should involve discussions on immediate next steps, short-term objectives, and long-term goals based on the customer's interests and strengths.
- When interpreting assessment results, Workforce Consultants should also identify any barriers the customer might face and incorporate these considerations into the ISS or IEP. This might include discussing any needs for supportive services or accommodations based on assessment findings.
- Encourage Workforce Consultants to involve customers in the assessment interpretation process by asking questions, inviting their feedback, and verifying their understanding. This builds trust and ensures that customers feel empowered and informed about their service strategy.
- After interpreting assessment results and integrating them into the ISS or IEP, Workforce Consultants should document the discussion and establish a schedule for periodic review. Regular reviews allow for adjustments based on new assessments, progress, or shifts in the customer's employment or educational situation.