

SECTION 2 – ELIGIBILITY, PRIORITY, AND ENROLLMENT FRAMEWORK

2.1 Purpose

This section establishes uniform standards governing eligibility determination, priority of service application, income verification, assessment requirements, and enrollment procedures for all workforce programs administered or overseen by the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board.

The purpose of this section is to:

- Prevent enrollment of ineligible individuals
- Ensure proper documentation prior to service delivery
- Protect against disallowed costs
- Ensure compliance with federal and state regulations
- Maintain consistency across funding streams

Eligibility must be fully verified and documented prior to enrollment unless otherwise expressly permitted by governing regulations or state guidance.

2.2 General Eligibility Standards

Eligibility requirements vary by funding source. Program staff must determine eligibility based on the governing statute, regulation, Notice of Award, or state guidance applicable to the specific program.

At minimum, eligibility determinations shall:

- Be based on objective and verifiable documentation
- Be fully supported by source documentation where required
- Be reviewed prior to enrollment
- Be documented in the official case management system
- Be maintained in the participant file

Where multiple funding sources are used, eligibility must be established separately for each funding stream as required.

2.3 Age, Citizenship, and Work Authorization

Where applicable to the funding source, staff must verify:

- Age eligibility
- Authorization to work in the United States
- Compliance with applicable statutory requirements

Acceptable documentation may include:

- Birth certificate
- Government-issued identification
- Passport
- Employment authorization documentation
- Other verifiable official documents

Documentation must be retained in the participant file.

2.4 Income Determination (When Required)

For programs requiring income eligibility, income must be determined in accordance with:

- Federal poverty guidelines
- Lower Living Standard Income Level (LLSIL), where applicable
- Program-specific income rules

Income calculations must:

- Identify household size
- Identify income sources
- Identify the applicable income determination period
- Be documented using acceptable verification

Acceptable documentation may include:

- Pay stubs
- Employer statements
- Public assistance documentation
- Unemployment compensation records
- Tax returns
- Self-attestation only where expressly allowed

Income calculation worksheets must be retained in the participant file.

2.5 Self-Sufficiency Determination (When Applicable)

For programs using self-sufficiency standards, self-sufficiency wage is defined as:

200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level adjusted for household size, or the Virginia Non-Metro Lower Living Standard Income Level (LLSIL) for the appropriate household size, whichever is higher.

Documentation must include:

- Household size verification
- Income verification
- Wage documentation (if employed)

Self-sufficiency determinations must be documented prior to service authorization.

2.6 Priority of Service (WIOA Adult Program)

When WIOA Adult funds are limited, priority of service shall be applied in accordance with WIOA Section 134€(3)€ and applicable guidance issued by Virginia Works.

Federal priority of service must be applied before local priority categories.

Priority shall be given in the following order:

1. Veterans and eligible spouses who are:

- Recipients of public assistance
- Low-income
- Basic skills deficient

2. Non-veterans who are:

- Recipients of public assistance
- Low-income
- Basic skills deficient

3. Veterans and eligible spouses who do not meet the above criteria

4. Local priority categories established by the Workforce Development Board

Veterans priority applies at all priority levels.

Priority determinations must be documented in the participant file and case management system.

In establishing local priority categories, the Workforce Development Board may consider regional labor market conditions, barriers to employment, and the need to support participants in obtaining the skills necessary to secure employment that leads to economic self-sufficiency.

Local priority categories are intended to complement federal priority requirements while supporting workforce development strategies that address skill gaps and employer workforce needs within the region.

Determinations regarding whether an individual is considered not self-sufficient for purposes of local priority shall be made in accordance with the Self-Sufficiency Determination policy described in Section 2.5.

2.6.1 Local Priority of Service Categories

In addition to the federal priority categories defined above, the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board has established the following local priority populations when program funds are limited.

Local priority categories may include individuals who:

- Are determined to be not self-sufficient according to the Workforce Development Board's Self-Sufficiency Determination defined in Section 2.5
- Do not possess a high school diploma or equivalency
- Demonstrate significant skill gaps that prevent them from obtaining or retaining employment that provides self-sufficient wages
- Require occupational skills training to transition into in-demand industries or occupations
- Are unemployed for 27 weeks or longer
- Are justice-involved or returning from incarceration
- Are individuals in recovery from substance use disorder
- Are individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability
- Are individuals with disabilities
- Reside in areas of concentrated poverty within the workforce development area

Local priority categories are applied only after federally required priority populations have been served.

For purposes of this policy, skill gaps may include individuals who lack the occupational, technical, or foundational skills required to secure employment in in-demand occupations within the local labor market.

Program staff must document the priority category used for enrollment in the participant case file and in the case management system.

2.7 Selective Service Compliance

For programs requiring Selective Service compliance:

Males born on or after January 1, 1960 must be registered with the Selective Service System prior to enrollment unless exempt.

For males age 26 or older, staff must document one of the following prior to enrollment:

- Proof of registration
- Documentation of exemption; or
- A determination that failure to register was **not knowing and willful**

Failure to properly document Selective Service compliance may result in disallowed costs.

2.8 Assessment Requirements

Prior to enrollment, participants must receive an objective assessment appropriate to the funding source.

Assessment may include:

- Basic skills testing
- Career interest inventories
- Work readiness evaluations
- Barrier identification
- Supportive service needs

Assessment results must inform development of the Individual Employment Plan (IEP) or Individual Service Strategy (ISS) as applicable.

Assessment documentation must be retained in the participant file.

2.9 Enrollment Procedures

Enrollment shall occur only after:

- All eligibility criteria have been verified
- Required documentation is collected
- Eligibility checklist is completed
- Required supervisory review is completed (if applicable)
- Participant signs required enrollment documentation
- Participant is entered into the official case management and reporting system

Enrollment occurs when the participant receives the first reportable staff-assisted service following eligibility determination.

Services funded by the program may not be provided prior to official enrollment unless expressly allowed by governing regulations.

2.10 Prohibition on Retroactive Enrollment

Retroactive enrollment is prohibited.

Eligibility must be determined and documented prior to enrollment in accordance with federal regulations and applicable Virginia Works guidance.

Eligibility documentation must exist and be reviewed before the participant is enrolled in the program.

However, when federal or state guidance permits the use of self-certification for specific eligibility elements, enrollment may proceed based on the participant's self-certification while staff make reasonable efforts to obtain third-party documentation.

Examples may include situations where participants temporarily lack access to documentation such as:

- Social Security number verification
- Public assistance verification
- Selective Service registration documentation
- Other documentation permitted under applicable Virginia Works Letters (VWLs)

When self-certification is used:

- The self-certification must be allowable under federal or state guidance
- Staff must document attempts to obtain source documentation
- Source documentation should be obtained and placed in the participant file when reasonably available

Self-certification may not be used when regulations or state guidance require third-party documentation.

2.11 Exception Categories (When Applicable)

Where program regulations permit enrollment of individuals under exception categories:

- Exceptions must be documented
- Percentage limits must be tracked
- Approval must be documented prior to enrollment
- Exception usage must be monitored to prevent exceeding regulatory caps

Exception tracking logs shall be maintained and reviewed periodically.

2.12 Eligibility Review and Quality Assurance

Supervisory staff shall conduct periodic review of eligibility determinations to ensure:

- Documentation is complete
- Income calculations are accurate
- Priority is properly applied
- Selective Service compliance is documented
- No retroactive enrollment occurred

Findings shall be documented and corrective action implemented where necessary.

2.13 Documentation Standards

All eligibility documentation must be:

- Legible
- Complete
- Consistent
- Audit-ready
- Retained in accordance with record retention requirements

Documentation methods must comply with federal regulations and applicable Virginia Works Letters, including allowable use of self-certification.

Incomplete documentation shall prohibit enrollment.

2.14 Monitoring and Enforcement

Failure to comply with eligibility and enrollment standards may result in:

- Disallowed costs
- Required repayment
- Corrective action
- Staff retraining
- Special monitoring conditions

The Workforce Development Board reserves the authority to suspend enrollment authority where repeated noncompliance is identified.