



POLICY: Allowable uses of funds for Outreach Activities for Federal Formula and Competitive Grant Awards – Marketing/Advertising

Policy

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires grantees to inform the public about services, conduct proactive outreach to underserved populations, and make individuals aware of services that can support their employment needs. The Uniform Guidance regulates the administrative and financial requirements of federal grant funds, including WIOA formula grants; see [2 CFR part 200](#) and United States Department of Labor (DOL) exceptions at [2 CFR part 2900](#). Specifically, [2 CFR 200.421](#) allows grantees to recruit program participants and engage businesses by communicating with them.

Outreach Allowable Activities

Grantees are encouraged to conduct outreach activities to meet the needs of their customers and fulfill grant objectives. WIOA’s Section 188 nondiscrimination and equal opportunity implementing regulations at [29 CFR 38.40](#) specifically address the affirmative outreach obligations of WIOA recipients. This section states “recipients must take appropriate steps to ensure that they are providing equal access to their WIOA Title I-financially assisted programs and activities. These steps should involve reasonable efforts to include members of the various groups protected by these regulations including but not limited to persons of different sexes, various racial and/or ethnic national origin groups, various religions, individuals with limited English proficiency, individuals with disabilities, and individuals in different age groups.”

Grantees may consider creating an outreach plan that details how the purpose of each outreach activity is linked to the program’s objectives and indicators and how they would help meet performance outcomes or program objectives. Grantees should make meaningful efforts to ensure outreach activities and/or materials are inclusive of the communities they are trying to recruit and serve.

This policy provides examples of some of the more common allowable outreach activities, not an exhaustive list. As with all Federal award costs, grantees are encouraged to review the Cost Principles contained in [2 CFR 200.400 – 200.476](#) of the Uniform Guidance and remember the basic criteria that costs charged to a Federal award must be necessary, reasonable, and allocable.

1. *Defining Advertising and Public Relations* – the key is to make sure that the grantee is promoting Federally-funded activities, services, and programs, and not solely promoting the organization’s name recognition or image. To apply the requirements in the Uniform

Guidance, grantees should understand the difference between advertising and public relations ([2 CFR 200.421](#)).

Advertising is allowed through various media strategies, such as print, electronic, digital, radio, social media, billboards/signage, text apps, and Quick Response (QR) code. Allowable activities include promoting program outreach and other specific purposes necessary to meet the requirements of the grant award. The media strategies used to conduct outreach to the public might be personnel or non-personnel costs and promote the activities of the Federal award. Grantees should ensure compliance with the regulations at 2 CFR 200.421(b) and 200.421(e), their grant award and terms, as well as the guidance in Attachment 1 of the chapter.

Public relations include activities that promote Federally funded activities, services, and programs, and are typically personnel costs. Some public relations activities include, but are not limited to, attendance at, facilitation of, collaboration with, or participation in job/career/community fairs, rapid response events, one-stop satellite centers/mobile one-stops, community access points, high school/college career day, podcasts and other interviews, etc. The Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR 200.421(d) describes allowable public relations activities and at 2 CFR 200.421(e) lists unallowable public relations activities as well as general rules of thumb to apply when determining what public relations activities are allowable or unallowable.

DOL broadly interprets grant outreach activities that promote the activities, services, and programs of the grant award to mean efforts to educate, enroll, employ, or extend referrals to customers with interests in DOL's publicly funded workforce development system efforts.

2. *General rules of thumb* – The first step in assessing if a cost is allowable cost to a WIOA grant is to determine if the cost is necessary. Some questions to consider are: Is this cost necessary for the performance of the grant? Will this cost assist the organization in achieving its grant's outcomes and goals?

Another step in assessing an allowable cost to a WIOA grant is reasonableness. When testing for reasonableness of a cost, consider the prudent person theory. In the prudent person theory, your organizations must consider:

- Would a prudent person use Federal funds to purchase such items?
- Would you have used your own funds to purchase such items?
- Do internal controls (MOU/IFA, policies, sub-recipient agreements, contracts, etc.) exist that designate/describe outreach activities and/or limits?
- Is the federal grant receiving a benefit and if so, are costs properly allocated based on the relative benefit received?
- If costs are to be shared with other funding streams, are costs being allocated properly?

3. *Ways to conduct outreach* – Below is a list of several examples of activities and platforms allowed with grant funds. See [TEGL 03-23](#) for more detail on each of the following:
- a. *In-Person Outreach*: Such as attending job fair, meeting participants at community locations, rapid response events, mobile one-stop centers, high school/college career days, etc. For each type of special or targeted population, the grantee may need a unique method or strategy for locating, attracting, and retaining participants for your program. If the grantee does not have enough staff, consider conducting outreach through organizations that are willing and able to spread the grant’s key messages to their audience.
 - b. *Print*: Include a variety of materials including advertising and written articles in the local newspaper or neighborhood newsletter, informational postcards, brochures and flyers, doorknob hangers, pamphlets, and leaflets. Other examples include bus stop signage, advertising on benches, banners, billboards, vehicle wraps, etc. QR codes may be used in print media to direct potential participants to online information on the grant-funded activities, services, or programs.
 - c. *Radio and TV*: Examples include advertising or stories on local radio and TV stations, public service announcements and press releases, on-air interviews with local radio or TV stations, etc.
 - d. *Websites*: The organization or program website is an excellent way to provide practical information about how participants and community members can engage with the organization and receive services. Note that all websites funded with federal funds must meet the accessibility requirements established by Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
 - e. *Email Communication*: Signature lines can include an additional website link, QR code, or description of an upcoming event or workforce activities, services, and/or program offerings. Use plain language wherever possible.
 - f. *Text Messaging (SMS) Applications*: These may be particularly well-suited to grantees who need to communicate with participants in real time. In addition, this is a way to remind participants of upcoming appointments or outstanding documents, to promote a new program/service offering, or to blast out employment opportunities. Some texting tools have functions to automate messages to go out at certain times to groups of people, and track analytics such as if and when the messages are opened, or website links clicked. As with all activities, grantees must ensure participant data privacy. It is also important to review the data privacy policies of these text messaging applications and other social media platforms.
 - g. *Social media*: The use of grant funds to create social media accounts, such as Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and other platform accounts to promote the grant

services offered, raise awareness of the program, and strengthen relations with the community is an effective way to virtually connect with customers regardless of distance. Please note there may be Federal or state laws that prohibit the use of certain platforms, so grantees should be aware of any restrictions before use. In addition, grant award terms may prohibit certain activities, such as lobbying, and these restrictions apply to social media as well. For more ideas on how to develop social media strategies, view the webinar: [Yes, WIOA Can! Post, Like, Follow, Share! Using Social Media as an Outreach and Marketing Tool.](#)

- h. *Quick Response (QR) codes:* QR codes are a square holding a barcode-like graphic, comprised of machine-readable information. When someone uses a cell phone to take a picture of the QR code, the phone recognizes the machine-readable information, and can then go to a specific website. QR codes require minimal space, are easy to scan, can store a good amount of information, and can be used to link to text, digital business cards, multimedia, and social media channels.
- i. *Influencers:* Influencers are people that have often amassed large followings via different types of media platforms and use their power of influence to communicate information. Influencers may be able to assist grantees in conducting outreach activities by communicating to potential participants what programs and services they offer. Grantees using a contracted personality should provide details/speaker's notes to the influencer to promote the Federal award's activities, services, and programs. When considering whether to use an influencer for outreach, the grantee should consider the Uniform Guidance's Cost Principles. Other things that might be considered are the influencer's reputation, follower base, any state or local vetting requirements, the receptivity of potential participants, the technology access of participants and the cost-benefit compared to a more traditional outreach modality.
- j. *Blog and Podcast Interviews:* These platforms are usually interactive content that may be individually or serially posted and can discuss a Federally funded activity, service, or program offering to a specifically targeted audience. The frequency of use, potential participant cost, and availability of ongoing content should all be considered when using this outreach strategy.
- k. *Mobile American Job Centers (AJCs) or workforce service delivery vehicles:* To reach people where they live, shop, and gather, particularly in more rural areas, grantees may consider purchasing a vehicle to conduct outreach as well as provide employment and training services. The Uniform Guidance considers motor vehicles as general-purpose equipment, which are allowable under the Cost Principles. Costs to repair and maintain the vehicle are also allowable. The costs of the vehicle and its maintenance must meet all the "factors of allowability" outlined in [2 CFR 200.403](#), and in some circumstances, prior written approval from DOL-ETA may be required. Prior written approval from DEED is always required if the equipment unit price is \$5,000 or more. If the motor vehicle

benefits two or more programs, the cost of the mobile AJC and the costs to maintain the vehicle must be allocated to the other programs based on the relative benefit received ([2 CFR 200.405\(d\)](#)). ETA encourages grantees to leverage relationships with other partners that serve the same community and may have the same purpose or mission when purchasing, staffing, and maintaining a mobile AJC unit.

4. *Outreach in Multiple Languages* - Grantees can use funds to create materials in multiple languages or to procure translation and interpretation services. Offering materials translated into the languages used in the community is a key effort to improve outreach and, indeed, may be required depending upon the circumstances. See [29 CFR 38.9](#). Additionally, consider expanding outreach efforts to individuals who have Limited English Proficiency (LEP) through the use of a language access guide (called the “I Speak Card”). The “I Speak Card” is a language identification card/poster that will assist in identifying a preferred language for potential participants that speak a language other than English, so they can obtain the necessary assistance. Organizations can use such a card to pinpoint the appropriate speakers for anyone that requests services through the organization. Also, visit the LEP website (<https://www.lep.gov/>) for tips on addressing language barriers. Finally, consider partnering with local organizations that serve a diverse population for assistance in drafting culturally competent outreach materials in a variety of languages as this will help build a stronger relationship and presence with the local community.
5. *Accessibility* – Grantees must make information about their services accessible to individuals with disabilities by providing auxiliary aids and services, including information in alternative formats, and can use funds to ensure outreach materials (including, for example, printed materials, forms, and presentations) are accessible. In addition, when developing, procuring, maintaining, or using electronic and information technology with Federal funds, including websites and electronically stored documents or information, grantees should provide access to and use of information and data for individuals with disabilities that is comparable to what is provided for individuals without disabilities. Grantees can refer to Government Services Administration’s (GSA) website on electronic and information technology accessibility (www.Section508.gov) as a resource. Please note that specific accessibility standards apply to QR codes. DOL’s Office of Disability Employment Policy, DOL’s Civil Rights Center, and ETA have created a WIOA 188 guide to nondiscrimination for individuals with disabilities, available at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/oasam/centers-offices/civil-rights-center/statutes/section-188-workforce-innovation-opportunity-act/guide>. The guide provides several examples of making materials, space, and services more fully accessible for individuals with disabilities.

Stevens Amendment

The text of the amendment reads: When issuing statements, press releases, requests for proposals, bid solicitations and other documents describing projects or programs funded in whole or in part with Federal money, all grantees receiving Federal funds included in

this act, shall clearly state— (1) the percentage of the total costs of the program or project which will be financed with Federal money; (2) the dollar amount of Federal funds for the project or program; and (3) percentage and dollar amount of the total costs of the project or program that will be financed by non-governmental sources

The following statement is an approved declaration which can be used by grantees on all marketing and advertising materials:

“These services are funded in part by the NJ Department of Labor with funds from the US Department of Labor through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.”

This guidance provides examples but does not address every potential scenario. Grantees are encouraged to review their outreach plans and consider the examples to most effectively reach and best serve jobseekers and employers.

Related Links

- TEGL No. 16-16, *One-Stop Operations Guidance for the American Job Center Network*, <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/advisories/training-and-employment-guidance-letter-no-16-16>
- TEGL No. 17-16, *Infrastructure Funding of the One-Stop Delivery System*, <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/advisories/training-and-employment-guidance-letter-no-17-16>
- Training and Employment Notice No. 24-18, *Updated Promising Practices in Achieving Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity: A Section 188 Disability Reference Guide*, <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/advisories/training-and-employment-notice-no-24-18>
- ETA webinar titled *Yes, WIOA Can! Post, Like, Follow, Share! Using Social Media as an Outreach and Marketing Tool* held January 11, 2023. Available at <https://www.workforcegps.org/events/2023/01/11/19/49/Outreach-and-Marketing-for-the-Public-Workforce-Development-System-2>
- ETA webinar titled *Outreach and Marketing for the Public Workforce Development System: Exploring the Possibilities!* held on October 11, 2022. Available at <https://www.workforcegps.org/events/2022/10/11/18/35/Outreach-and-Marketing-for-the-Public-Workforce-Development-System-Exploring-the-Possibilities>
- <https://www.hhs.gov/guidance/document/stevens-amendment>

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