

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT NOTICE	NO. 14-12
	DATE December 4, 2012

TO: STATE WORKFORCE AGENCIES
STATE WORKFORCE ADMINISTRATORS
STATE WORKFORCE LIAISONS
STATE AND LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARD DIRECTORS
AMERICAN JOB CENTER MANAGERS

FROM: JANE OATES /s/
Assistant Secretary
Employment and Training Administration

KATHLEEN MARTINEZ /s/
Assistant Secretary
Office of Disability Employment Policy

SUBJECT: Receiving Ticket to Work Payments as an Employment Network

1. **Purpose.** To announce a streamlined process for American Job Centers, state workforce agencies, and workforce investment boards to become Employment Networks (ENs) under the Social Security Administration's Ticket to Work and Self Sufficiency (TTW) program.
2. **References.**
 - Training and Employment Notice (TEN) No. 6-02, *The Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act (TWWIA) and Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program Implementation*;
 - TEN No. 20-07, *Ticket to Work Program-Employment Networks*; and
 - TEN No. 6-11, *Increasing the Public Workforce Development System's Participation in the Ticket to Work Program (TTW) for Disability Beneficiaries*.
3. **Background.** The TTW program is the centerpiece of the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act (TWIIA) of 1999, Public Law 106-170. This program provides Social Security disability beneficiaries receiving Social Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits with incentives and options for them to enter or re-enter the world of work. It provides disability beneficiaries with choices, opportunities, and supports needed to become employed, stay employed, and increase earnings. It has the potential for eventually reducing their dependency on benefits by becoming fully self-supporting.

Most adults who receive Social Security benefits based on disability are eligible for the TTW Program. They may assign their Tickets to an Employment Network (EN) of their choice to obtain education, training, employment services, vocational rehabilitation, and other support services necessary to maximize their economic self-sufficiency through work opportunities. An EN is an entity that is approved by the SSA to serve individuals under the TTW program. Once approved eligible by SSA, an EN can accept a Ticket from any individual who qualifies for the TTW program. All individuals on SSDI and SSI between the ages of 18 and 64 qualify for the TTW program. The individual has complete choice regarding the EN to which he/she assigns his/her Ticket, and the EN has complete choice regarding which Tickets to accept. When an individual becomes employed at specified earning levels, the EN receives a series of payments from SSA linked to that individual's outcomes.

Per the TTW regulations, workforce development entities are automatically assumed to be qualified as ENs, although they must complete the WIA EN Payment Agreement. The EN Payment Agreement is limited to state workforce agencies, state workforce investment boards as established under section 111 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), local workforce investment boards as established under sections 116 and 117 of WIA, or One-Stop Career Centers as established under section 121(d) of WIA, branded nationally as American Job Centers. The EN Payment Agreement allows an entity to become a qualified vendor, but does not obligate the entity to provide services (i.e., it is not a contract for services). It simply allows the entity to serve individuals under the TTW Program, if the entity so chooses, and describes the terms and conditions for payments that can be expected upon the achievement of certain milestones and outcomes.

The Department of Labor (DOL) has promoted public workforce system entities becoming active ENs (i.e., accepting Tickets and receiving payment for providing services to Ticket Holders) as part of its comprehensive effort to expand the capacity of the workforce investment system to serve people with disabilities. As a result of these efforts, combined with the SSA's technical assistance efforts targeted to the public workforce system, the number of public workforce entities that are ENs has increased by over 30 percent over the last two years. Over 10 million people receive SSDI and/or SSI benefits. The workforce investment system is currently serving thousands of Social Security disability beneficiaries each year and more public workforce entities could participate in and reap the benefits of the TTW program by becoming ENs.

- 4. New Workforce Investment Act EN Payment Agreement.** This new WIA EN Payment Agreement is the first time that the SSA has issued an EN Payment Agreement solely for the public workforce system. It is a result of the ongoing partnership between DOL and SSA to expand the capacity of the American Job Center network to serve persons receiving Social Security disability benefits, and ultimately improve their employment outcomes, leading the way to economic self-sufficiency. The following are a few highlights from the EN Payment Agreement:

- Simplifies and reduces the paperwork for public workforce entities to become ENs.
- Permits the use of an Individual Employment Plan (IEP), rather than requiring the use of a SSA Individual Work Plan, to receive payment as an EN.
- Provides two options for payment: 1) "Intensive Services Only" - This is the default option for a Workforce EN under this Agreement and involves career planning, job placement, and short-term job retention services for Ticket holders. If the Workforce EN chooses this option, it will be limited to Phase 1 milestone and outcome payments under the Ticket payment rules; and 2) "Ongoing Employment Support Option" - Under this option, the Workforce EN provides short-term intensive services and ongoing employment support services, provided by staff hired for this specific purpose. The ENs selecting this option can receive all payments available, both Phase 1 and 2 milestone, and outcome payments.
- Permits the use of electronic tools, including eData Sharing, eTicket Assignment, and Workforce ePay, to expedite payments to Workforce EN entities, which removes significant administrative burdens.

SSA is in the process of developing new metrics to evaluate the performance of all ENs. Both the Department and SSA are committed to reducing the dependency of persons with disabilities on public benefits and increasing their economic self-sufficiency. Similar to the performance metrics established by the Department for the workforce system, SSA performance metrics emphasize employment and earnings. SSA guidance on its new metrics is forthcoming; the Department will share it with the workforce system as well.

5. Technical Assistance. The following provides a list of targeted technical assistance resources, funded by SSA or DOL to provide information to the public workforce system, for organizations/agencies applying to become an EN, and for existing ENs:

- *For DEI grantees:* DOL also supports workforce system entities becoming ENs through the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI), an initiative jointly funded by the Department's Employment and Training Administration and the Office of Disability Employment Policy. The purposes of the DEI are to: 1) improve coordination and collaboration among employment and training programs implemented at state and local levels, including the TTW Program; and 2) build effective community partnerships that leverage public and private resources to better serve individuals with disabilities and improve employment outcomes. Visit: <http://dei-ideas.org>.
- *For other workforce entities:* DOL, in coordination with SSA, operates the One-Stop Ticket Success Project which provides technical assistance to workforce system entities to become ENs and expand their capacity to serve Social Security disability beneficiaries. Visit: <http://ticketsuccess.groupsites.com/main/summary>.
- *For existing workforce ENs:* SSA has a Web site dedicated to providing general information and technical assistance to public workforce ENs. Visit: <https://yourtickettowork.com/web/ttw/one-stop-as-an-en>.

- *For all ENs:* SSA's EN Technical Assistance and Support Center within the TTW Operations Support Manager provides support focused on delivering improved training, enhancing internal procedures, and increasing Ticket assignments and payments. Visit: <https://yourtickettowork.com/web/ttw/en-workforce-one-stops>.
6. **Action Requested.** DOL asks recipients to distribute this TEN to state workforce agencies, state and local workforce investment boards, American Job Centers, and other workforce system partners.
 7. **Inquiries.** Questions on this TEN may be directed to the appropriate Regional Offices, Laura Voght, Social Security Administration, laura.voght@ssa.gov or Randee Chafkin, Office of Workforce Investment, Employment and Training Administration, U.S. Department of Labor at (202) 693-2723 or chafkin.randee@dol.gov.
 8. **Attachment.** SSA's Workforce Investment Act Employment Network Payment Agreement