ETA Coronavirus (COVID-19) FAQs

The Employment and Training Administration (ETA) has developed a Frequently Answered Questions (FAQs) to address questions related to Coronavirus (COVID-19) to help state and local workforce leaders, and other stakeholders and partners to assist the public workforce system during this crisis.

Trade Act, or Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), Programs

Updated as of 4/14/20

(New as of 4/14/20) Q. Are signatures from the training institution or instructor required to sign off on a participant’s progress in training for purposes of Completion Trade Readjustment Assistance (TRA) eligibility?

Response: To determine that the worker has “substantially met the performance benchmarks established in the approved training plan,” TEGL No. 05-15, Change 1, Attachment A, Section C.5.1 (Training Benchmarks to meet Completion TRA Eligibility Requirements) explains that states must evaluate satisfactory progress against the two benchmarks at intervals of no more than 60 days, beginning with the start of the training plan. For this review, states may request the training vendor to provide documentation of the worker’s satisfactory progress. The case manager may attest to the worker’s progress after consultation with the vendor and the worker. The state may request that the worker provide documentation of the worker’s satisfactory progress toward meeting the training benchmarks from the vendor, such as through instructor attestations.

To address the question, the mechanism for such collection is flexible and not limited to hard copy signature only. A case manager may document telephone conversations, save emails into the case file, or use other similar collection mechanisms. If state policy requires that a signature be obtained, it would be helpful to determine if an electronic signature will meet state policy or if state policy could be met in some other way.

Q. If a school shuts down and an individual cannot participate in online classes, does the state move the individual to a Work Search Status until the individual returns to school?

Response: The State Workforce Agency should request an explanation as to why the individual cannot participate in online classes. If it is due to a lack of supplies (such as a computer), then that could be
covered by TAA training funds. If the school is not offering online classes, and is therefore on a break, then the Extended Benefits work test does not apply in this case.

Q. If a TAA participant finds a job during this period, can the individual later return to the training program and resume training, or should the individual apply for a new training program?

Response: The individual may return or resume his or her approved TAA training plan. Amending or modifying that training plan is best addressed on a case by case basis. No individual shall be entitled to more than one training plan under a single certification, in accordance with 20 CFR 617.22(f)(2).

Q. What if an individual is on a waiver from training and stops looking for work because of COVID-19? The individual has not stated that he or she is sick, but the individual does not want to look for work at this time. Does the State Workforce Agency continue to pay benefits?

Response: All Trade Readjustment Allowances (TRA) require the individual to meet the Extended Benefits (EB) work test unless the individual is participating in TAA training. The EB work test provisions within State law govern whether this individual may be eligible. Please refer to 20 CFR 615.8(d), (e), (f), (g).

Q. If the payment of benefits is allowed while an individual is not in school, will the individual be required to satisfy the Extended Benefit (EB) Work Test for each week he or she is not in school?

Response: Without participation in TAA training, only basic TRA payments are allowed. If there is a cessation in TAA training, the EB work test does not apply, but nothing prevents the individual from continuing to seek employment. Additional and Completion TRA are not payable without participation in TAA training. Accordingly, conducting the EB work test is not required but nothing prevents the individual from continuing to seek employment.

Q. How long should State Workforce Agencies continue to pay Additional TRA Benefits?

Response: Benefits are payable if the individual is eligible. Additional TRA is payable for a maximum of 65 weeks after exhaustion of Basic TRA while the individual is in approved TAA training. Additional TRA is payable during the consecutive calendar weeks that occur in the 78-week period that begins immediately following the last week of entitlement to Basic TRA, the first week of approved TAA training if the training begins after the last week of entitlement to Basic TRA, or the first week in which TAA training is approved, if such training already has commenced (although Additional TRA or training costs may not be paid for any week before the week in which the TAA training was approved). See TEGL No. 5-15, Change 1, Attachment A, Section C.6. (Maximum Number of Weeks of TRA and Duration) for more information.
Q. Can TRA be paid to individuals whose full-time training is reduced to part-time due to COVID-19?

Response: Under Sec. 236(g)(2) of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended, individuals cannot receive TRA for part-time training.

Q. Due to COVID-19, if an individual requires a computer to continue his or her classes, even if the computer is not documented as required for all students, will the cost of the computer be covered?

Response: If a training institution requires that students take courses online due to COVID-19 and the individual does not have the equipment needed to continue his or her classes, then a computer is a requirement, and that cost should be covered accordingly. As ever, steps should be taken to set parameters around the reasonable cost of purchasing the computer.