

# 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.*

## WIOA Dislocated Worker Program

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*Updated as of 4/14/20*

**(New as of 4/14/20) Q. Can ETA broaden the definition of a dislocated worker?**

**Response:** Eligibility for the Dislocated Worker program is based on the definition in the WIOA statute at WIOA sec. 3(15), and eligibility is not waivable under WIOA. However, there is some flexibility in how this definition is applied and ETA encourages states and local areas to review their dislocated worker policies to ensure impacted individuals who may be eligible to receive the services they need.

If a state receives a [National Dislocated Worker Grant](#) (DWG), in addition to dislocated workers, the state can also serve workers laid off as a result of the disaster, including workers who are laid off because of a quarantine, because they miss work to care for a family member, or because they cannot come to their regular workplace due to social distancing requirements; this also includes workers laid off due to a business closure related to disruptions caused by the outbreak and the efforts to contain it. DWGs can also serve long-term unemployed individuals and self-employed individuals who become unemployed or underemployed as a result of a disaster. See [TEGL 12-19](#) for more information.

## WIOA National Dislocated Worker Grants (DWGs)

### Q. Which entities are eligible to apply for a Disaster Recovery DWG under HHS Secretary Azar’s public health emergency declaration for COVID-19?

**Response:** Entities eligible to apply for Disaster Recovery DWGs are:

- ▶ States
- ▶ Outlying areas
- ▶ Indian Tribal Governments as defined in the Stafford Act (42 U.S.C. 5122(6))

Secretary Azar’s declaration is “nationwide,” so any eligible entity in any location may apply.

### Q. How does a state submit an emergency disaster recovery DWG application?

**Response:** With the public health declaration and the FEMA emergency declaration, all states, outlying areas and Indian tribal entities under the Stafford Act are eligible to apply for Disaster Recovery DWG funds. Applicants may request Disaster Recovery DWGs through an abbreviated emergency application to facilitate timely delivery of DWG assistance in response to a disaster event. These applications should be submitted to ETA within 15 days of the declaration of a qualifying disaster declaration by FEMA or other Federal agency having jurisdiction over the disaster. With appropriate justification, applicants may request an exception to this requirement, to allow for the submission of the emergency application within a reasonable timeframe after Day 15. Applicants also have the option to submit a full application containing a budget and plan, in lieu of an emergency application. Within 60 business days following an award of Disaster Recovery DWG funds requested via an emergency application, the grantee must modify the grant to provide a full application. This includes a budget, implementation plan, and a list of worksites where the disaster relief work will be performed. ETA may also require the grantee to submit additional information per the special conditions of the initial DWG award. For additional information on the DWG application process, go to the following link:

[https://www.doleta.gov/grants/application\\_howto.cfm](https://www.doleta.gov/grants/application_howto.cfm) (This information also published in TEGL 12-19)

### Q. What activities must states carry out with Disaster Recovery DWGs under the COVID-19 public health emergency declaration?

**Response:** WIOA sec. 170(d) generally requires that Disaster Recovery DWGs include disaster-relief employment, with the option for grantees to also conduct employment and training activities (which may include career, training, and supportive services) for workers eligible to participate in Disaster DWG activities.

**Q. Who can be served by Disaster Recovery DWGs under the coronavirus public health emergency declaration?**

**Response:** Eligible Disaster DWG participants for both disaster-relief employment and employment and training activities are:

- ▶ Dislocated workers
- ▶ Workers laid-off as a result of the disaster, including:
  - ▶ workers who are laid off as a result of a quarantine, because they miss work to care for a family member, or because they cannot come to their regular workplace in order to follow socially distance requirements; and
  - ▶ workers laid off after a business closure related to disruptions caused by the outbreak and the efforts to contain it.
- ▶ Self-employed individuals unemployed or underemployed because of the disaster
- ▶ Long-term unemployed individuals

**Q. For coronavirus, what types of disaster-relief employment are allowable?**

**Response:** Under WIOA sec. 170, disaster-relief employment is limited to one of two categories: cleanup activities or humanitarian assistance. Under a public health emergency declaration such as the coronavirus, the types of disaster-relief employment allowable might include:

- ▶ **Humanitarian assistance activities:** WIOA’s allowance for disaster-relief employment to provide humanitarian assistance provides greatest range of potential disaster-relief employment activities for this public health emergency. Disaster-relief employees may assist in addressing many needs created by this public health emergency and the prolonged social isolation that is necessary to curb it, such as:
  - ▶ Delivering medicine, food, or other supplies to older individuals and other individuals with respiratory conditions and other chronic medical disorders, with appropriate training and precautions. Coronavirus infection has been the most harmful to these populations, and there may be heavy need for such services that traditional volunteer organizations cannot support alone.
  - ▶ Helping set up quarantine areas and providing assistance to quarantined individuals.
  - ▶ Organizing and coordinating recovery, quarantine, or other related activities.
- ▶ **Cleanup activities:** WIOA requires that cleanup activities respond to the impacts of the disaster. While this activity is more typical for tornadoes, fires, and floods, some clean-up activities are relevant to coronavirus response. For instance, cleanup activities can include cleaning schools or sanitizing quarantine or treatment areas after their use. If research determines that coronavirus is more likely to spread under certain physical conditions, Disaster Recovery DWG funds could additionally be used to help remedy these conditions.
  - ▶ By law, disaster-relief employment activities may only respond to or mitigate the impact of the disaster, which means grantees may not use DWG-funded disaster-relief employees to perform work aimed at preventing future disasters. We consider preventative measures—setting up quarantines, cleaning buildings—as mitigation activities because they avoid the further spread of the virus.

**Q. In addition to Disaster Recovery DWGs, can states apply for Employment Recovery DWGs in response to layoffs caused by cancellations or shutdowns caused by coronavirus?**

**Response:** Yes. Any layoffs caused by the virus' spread, or other economic causes, could be eligible for Employment Recovery DWGs. WIOA limits Employment Recovery DWGs to providing only employment and training activities.

As already allowed under WIOA statute and regulations, states can apply for Employment Recovery DWGs if the following events occur:

- ▶ If there are 50 or more individuals laid off by one employer.
- ▶ If there are significant layoffs that significantly increase unemployment in a given community, even if the total layoffs are fewer than 50 individuals. For example, a cancellation of a large event may qualify because several different businesses such as hotels, caterers, area restaurants may lay off workers as a result of the event's cancellation.

**Q. Can a state use funds from a previous Disaster Recovery DWG to fund disaster relief employment for COVID-19 response activities (e.g. packing food for seniors)?**

**Response:** Generally, Disaster Recovery DWGs may be expanded to include new disaster impacts if they fall within the same program year of the award of the initial disaster (see TEGL 12-19, page 8). If an existing Disaster Recovery DWG was awarded in a prior program year, appropriations law prohibits adding new emergencies to the existing Disaster Recovery DWG project. In such cases, ETA recommends that states requiring additional funding to address the COVID-19 public health emergency consider submitting new applications for DWG funds.

**Q. Can ETA release the full amount approved for DWG awards?**

**Response:** With the public health declaration and the FEMA emergency declaration, all states, outlying areas and Indian tribal entities are eligible to apply for Disaster Recovery DWG funds. Applicants may request Disaster Recovery DWGs through an abbreviated emergency application to facilitate timely delivery of DWG assistance in response to a disaster event. These applications should be submitted to ETA within 15 days of the declaration of a qualifying disaster declaration. With appropriate justification, applicants may request an exception to this requirement, to allow for the submission of the emergency application within a reasonable timeframe after Day 15. Applicants also have the option to submit a full application containing a budget and plan, in lieu of an emergency application. Within 60 business days following an award of Disaster Recovery DWG funds requested via an emergency application, the grantee must modify the grant to provide a full application. This includes a budget, implementation plan, and a list of worksites where the disaster relief work will be performed. ETA may also require the grantee to submit additional information per the special conditions of the initial DWG award. For additional information on the DWG application process, go to the following link:

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