

June 28, 2007

NEMO WIB Issuance # 06-06

To: All Career Assistance Program Operators

From: Sharon Hays, Executive Director

Subject: CAP Incentive Awards

1. Purpose: To provide local policy for granting incentive awards to customers of the Career Assistance Program.
2. Substance: Incentive awards to customers of the Career Assistance Program are intended to encourage and reinforce initial and ongoing participation in the Career Assistance Program. All incentive awards should be granted with the specific purpose of promoting participation in allowable and countable CAP activities to assist in moving customers forward into self sufficiency and to improve work participation rates throughout the region. Participation in the program and communication with their case manager is an important factor in their success. These awards should be an incentive for all customers to participate fully and to communicate with employment staff, they should be a reward to those that do.

Incentives may only be granted to individuals receiving cash benefits in the Temporary Assistance program. If a Temporary Assistance recipient loses their eligibility for cash benefits, incentives may not be granted or continued. The only exception to this is when a recipient's TA case closes due to employment and they are eligible for 90 days of supportive services following an employment related closing. Incentive awards may be continued or granted during these 90 days of transitional supportive services. These incentive awards are considered "assistance" (just like a cash grant) for the purposes of the TANF legislation, and therefore all rules and requirements of the TANF program (such as counting months and time limits) apply. In other words, this means that even though the recipient is no longer receiving Temporary Assistance cash from FSD, any month in which the customer receives an incentive through this program would count toward their lifetime limit of months available.

Incentive awards are in addition to regular CAP services allowed in policy. They are incentive awards and in no instance should be granted in the form of something already allowable under WRE or TRE policies of CAP. For example, an incentive cannot be awarded with the intent to purchase necessary work clothes or tools when the recipient has exhausted their WRE balance.

Incentive awards are not an entitlement. All incentive awards will be subject to the availability of CAP funding.

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Documentation is the key to responsible use of any public funds and incentive award programs are no exception. Each CAP Program Operator should develop an internal agency policy or plan that outlines the specifics on their respective incentive award programs. These agency policies/plans must include the information outlined in Attachment #1. This plan must be submitted to the NEMO Workforce Investment Board for approval within 30 days of this issuance.

Examples of appropriate incentive awards for the Northeast Region would be: gift cards to retail stores available in the customer's community, vouchers/gift cards for restaurants, gift certificates for styling salons, gift baskets of personal hygiene products, calling cards, trac phones, or other related items. These incentive awards should be granted when milestones are met that promote full program participation and self sufficiency for the customer and their family.

Examples of inappropriate use of incentive awards would be cash awards to the customer, gas cards, or specific items that should be purchased with their WRE funds. Awarding any incentives for behavior that does not meet full program participation requirements would also be unacceptable in the Northeast Region. CAP Program Operators are encouraged to survey their customer base and develop new and innovative ideas of incentive awards to promote program success. Any incentive awards not mentioned in this issuance should be submitted to the NEMO Workforce Investment Board for approval prior to use.

Milestones that may be rewarded with incentive awards (and the possible award) would be:

<u>Milestone</u>	<u>Award</u>
Obtaining a job during the Job Search/Job Readiness phase of their program (must meet full participation requirements) and retaining that job for at least 2 weeks	\$25.00 gift card
Maintaining Unsubsidized Paid Employment (meeting all program requirements) for 30 days	\$10.00 gift card
Maintaining Unsubsidized Paid Employment (meeting all program requirements) for 60 days	\$15.00 gift card
Maintaining Unsubsidized Paid Employment (meeting all program requirements) for 90 days	\$25.00 gift card
Completing a certificate program (post secondary)	\$50.00 gift card
Completing and obtaining their GED	\$50.00 gift card
Closure of the customer's TANF case (due to successful employment) and remaining successfully employed and off of TANF benefits for a 90 period	\$100.00 gift card

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Other incentive awards may be granted based on the Program Operator's agency plan on incentive awards.

The intent is that incentive awards will only be utilized with a CAP customer during one enrollment and that the use of incentives will result in a successful closure of their TA case and the customer will have no need to re-apply for TA benefits. It is allowable to utilize incentive awards for a customer during a second enrollment if the customer lost their job due to no fault of their own which resulted in reapplying for TA benefits and the case manager believed it would be a useful motivation tool. However incentive awards will not be allowed for customers who enroll into CAP more than twice unless the case manager and their supervisor believe that there are extenuating circumstances that would make the use of incentive awards beneficial. Such a decision shall require approval from the NEMO Workforce Investment Board.

An individual who is currently Sanctioned is not eligible to receive incentive awards for any reason. After meeting all program requirements and their sanction has been lifted incentive awards would be appropriate for this customer to encourage continued participation.

3. Action: This issuance is affective immediately upon receipt and applies to all staff working with the Career Assistance Program.
4. Contact: If you have any questions regarding this issuance, please contact the Career Assistance Program Coordinator or me at (660) 327-5125.

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Cyndi Johns, Interim Co-Director  
NEMO Workforce Investment Board

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#### Attachment #1

Each CAP Program Operator must develop an internal agency policy or plan that outlines the specifics on their respective incentive award programs. These plans must include (but are not limited to):

- How the incentive awards will be tracked and monitored within the agency.
- How they will be reported to the NEMO Workforce Investment Board.
- A log sheet developed by the agency that lists the following:
  - Type of item awarded (gift card, phone card, gift basket, etc.)
  - The store or company that the gift card for (Wal-Mart, Pizza Hut, etc.).
  - The gift card # or other identification specific to the card or other item.
  - When the card or other item was purchased.
  - Amount of the card.
  - Date the item was awarded.
  - Name of the customer who was awarded the card.
  - Name of staff person awarding the card.
  - Reason for the award (what milestone did they reach).
- Specifics on the types of incentive awards that will be offered by the agency and when they will be granted.

All incentive awards should be approved by the case manager's supervisor prior to being granted. These situations should be justified and documented in case notes in the customer's ToolBox case record. Along with clear documentation that supervisory staff approved the award.