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REGIONAL ASSESSMENT CENTER INITIATIVE Q&A

What is this Initiative?

The Regional Assessment Center Initiative is a pilot program offering a low-cost alternative to Delegated Assessment Centers. The Regional Assessment Center Initiative offers exercises designed and implemented by HRD, at the cost of $250 to each applicant. This cost is the standard examination processing fee charged by HRD. Each Regional Assessment Center is tailored to the needs of the municipality. This initiative is offered in partnership with the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association (MCoPA) and EB Jacobs.

How does my municipality sign up for this Initiative?

Requesting to participate in the Initiative is no different than requesting a traditional exam. Simply complete a Form 13, and include a cover letter specifying that your community wants to participate in the Regional Assessment Center Initiative along with either:

- the municipality's intent to use the Sole Assessment Center model

  OR

- the municipality's intent to use the Weighted/Graded model, and the weights to be applied to each of the three examination components (written exam, assessment center, and E&E).

Communities are urged to request to participate in this opportunity as soon as possible. Seats are limited and will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis, and must be submitted by the established deadline.

What is the cost for participation in this Initiative?

HRD will charge the standard examination processing fee to applicants, currently $250. There is no direct cost to the participating community or Department.

What makes this Assessment Center "Regional"?

HRD is offering this Assessment Center option to communities at one time, and in one place. This means that at a centralized location, multiple communities will be sharing space to have their Assessment Center exercises implemented simultaneously. This does not mean that all candidates, regardless of their community, will be participating in the same set of exercises. Each set of Regional Assessment Center exercises is tailored to fit the specific community's needs, and will likely be slightly different for every community. The implementation of the Regional Assessment Center will take between one and three days, to be determined by HRD based on the size of the candidate pool and your community's specific exercises.

What is an "Assessment Center"?

Assessment Centers are a series of exercises designed to test how well a candidate would perform in a job, using simulations and role players to replicate real, on-the-job situations. Candidates are evaluated on qualities such as Leadership, Decision-Making, Interpersonal Skills, and Written and Oral Communication. These aspects of individual candidates cannot be measured using the multiple-choice written exam. As these qualities are important to job performance, especially as the tested rank increases up to Chief, the use of Assessment Centers in public safety promotions is growing and gaining respect within Massachusetts.
For more information, please see: International Congress on Assessment Center Methods http://www.assessmentcenters.org/articles.asp, especially *Guidelines and Ethical Considerations for Assessment Center Operations*, International Public Management Association Assessment Council (IPMAAC) http://www.assessmentcenters.org/pdf/00guidelines.pdf.

What are my Assessment Center testing options?
Communities can decide between a Delegated Assessment Center, which includes the use of third party vendor exercises, or a Regional Assessment Center, which includes the use of HRD exercises. Once this has been decided, communities can choose between a stand-alone Assessment Center (the Sole Assessment Center model), or an Assessment Center used in conjunction with HRD's multiple-choice written exam (the Weighted/Graded model). In the following pages you will find both a glossary of these terms and a more detailed comparison of these options.

What are the differences between a Delegated Assessment Center and the Regional Assessment Center Initiative?

The most immediate difference is that a Delegated Assessment Center requires the execution of a Delegation Agreement, and the community must hire a vendor to design and implement the Assessment Center exercises. In the Regional Assessment Center Initiative, exercises are designed and implemented via HRD, and no Delegation Agreement is required. For a more detailed breakdown of the differences, please contact Mrs. Loren Fitzgibbons at (617) 878-9741 or Loren.Fitzgibbons@state.ma.us.

What is the benefit of participating in the Regional Assessment Center Initiative to my community?

Participation in this Initiative will align your community on the forefront of testing advances. Use of an Assessment Center has proven to be a relevant and insightful exercise in many Massachusetts communities, for both candidates and Appointing Authorities. Any community who may be anticipating a promotion in certain titles and who is interested in advancing and supplementing their testing routine should request to participate in this Initiative. This testing option is proudly presented by HRD, with the partnership of the MCoPA, and with the support of EB Jacobs, Inc., international public safety consultant. This partnership allows HRD to offer participation in this Initiative at no direct cost to the community.

What is the benefit of using a Delegated Assessment Center to my community?

The Delegated Assessment Center process is still an available option to communities. A community may opt to use a Delegated Assessment Center for any number of reasons. Delegated Assessment Centers may occur at any time throughout the year, and may be a better fit for a community's needs. Also, if a community wishes to request an Open Competitive exam, or an exam in a title other than Police Chief, Deputy Police Chief, or Police Captain, that community must use the Delegated Assessment Center process. Please review the restrictions on participation in the Regional Assessment Center Initiative listed above, to determine if your community qualifies. Also, please note the timing of the anticipated list establishment.

How does the Weighted/Graded model work?

Appointing Authority determines the weights for all three examination components (HRD multiple choice written exam, assessment center, and E&E). For sample weight configurations, please see this document's Glossary. Education & Experience credits are given in accordance with traditional HRD multiple choice written exam standards. Candidates must pass all three examination components to be eligible to continue in the exam process and be placed on the eligible list (i.e., if a candidate fails the HRD multiple choice written examination, s/he is not eligible to continue on to participate in the Assessment Center exercises).

How does the Sole Assessment Center model work?

Employment & Experience credits are given only for employment/experience in the title of the exam (i.e., in a Sole AC for Police Chief, only time acting or employed in the title of Police Chief will receive credit). Standard weights are 90% Assessment Center score, plus 10% E&E score. Statutory preference points, for Veteran status or 25+ years employed in the Department, are added to a candidate's final score, if s/he is qualified. If a candidate does not qualify for E&E credit, his/her final score will be the Assessment Center score plus applicable statutory preference points. Candidates must pass the Assessment Center to be placed on the eligible list.

What exam titles are currently being offered?

Communities can request to participate in the following titles:
Police Chief – RACI in June, 2012, list establishment in August, 2012.
Deputy Police Chief – RACI in June, 2012, list establishment in August, 2012.
Police Captain – RACI tentatively scheduled for February, 2013, list establishment in April, 2013.

Are there any restrictions?

Yes. As this Initiative is still in the pilot stages, it is only being offered for certain titles (see above), and these titles must be in Civil Service. Also, this Initiative is available for use only with Departmental Promotional exams. Communities may not participate in RACI if they have already participated for the same exam title since 2009 (i.e., a Department who participated in RACI for Police Chief in 2011 will not be able to participate in RACI for Police Chief in 2012). Also, requests to participate will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis, and must be submitted by the established deadline.
The Delegated Assessment Center process remains an available option for communities who wish to use an Assessment Center in a situation that does not fit within these restrictions.

What if my municipality has already requested a Delegated Weighted/Graded Exam or Sole Assessment Center, but wants to sign up for this Initiative?

Please contact Mrs. Loren Fitzgibbons at (617) 878-9741 or Loren.Fitzgibbons@state.ma.us. The previously issued Delegation Agreement must be rescinded in order to participate in this Initiative.

How do I get more information on this Initiative?

Appointing Authorities who have specific questions regarding the Initiative that have not been addressed in this document may contact Mrs. Loren Fitzgibbons at (617) 878-9741 or Loren.Fitzgibbons@state.ma.us.

Glossary of Q&A Terms

AC: Assessment Center.

Delegated AC: Assessment Center designed and implemented through a vendor, with various responsibilities for administration assigned to the Delegation Administrator (Appointing Authority). May be a Sole AC or Weighted/Graded AC.

Delegation Agreement (DA): A contract that is developed by HRD upon a community's request for an exam involving a Delegated AC (either Weighted/Graded or Sole). This Agreement outlines the responsibilities of each party (Appointing Authority, HRD, and vendor) in the use of an AC.

Regional AC: Assessment Center designed and implemented via HRD, with responsibilities for administration remaining with HRD (Personnel Administrator). May be a Sole AC or Weighted/Graded AC.

Sole AC: Assessment Center used as the sole ranking device (no written exam). May include Employment & Experience credit for applicants who have time spent working in the exam title, with a weight of 10%.

Weighted/Graded AC: Assessment Center used in conjunction with HRD multiple choice written exam. Includes standard Education & Experience that accompanies all written promotional exams. Communities must indicate the weights of each of these three components (written exam, AC, and E&E).

Weights: Relative importance of each examination component in a Weighted/Graded exam. Should be determined by the Appointing Authority through establishing the relative importance of the qualities tested by each component for the specific job. Must total 100%, and must be specified when requesting this exam model.

SAMPLE WEIGHTED/GRADED WEIGHTS (%)		
Written Exam	Assessment Center	Education & Experience
40	40	20
45	45	10
50	40	10
50	30	20
60	20	20
60	30	10

Vendor: Outside consultant hired by community in a Delegated AC. Usually responsible for developing, implementing, scoring AC, etc. See Sample Delegation Agreements for full breakdown of vendor responsibilities in Delegated Sole and Weighted/Graded ACs.