

Charles D. Baker  
Governor

Karyn Polito  
Lieutenant Governor



Marylou Sudders  
Secretary

Elin M. Howe  
Commissioner

# Employment First Initiative: Progress Report on Pilot Project Funding

December 2015



**Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services  
Employment First Initiative: Progress Report on Pilot Project Funding  
December 2015**

**Line Item 5920-2026 of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 General Appropriation Act requires:**

*“For the operation of a pilot program to support individuals with disabilities transitioning from employment services offered at sheltered workshops to community-based employment or day support program services as part of the commonwealth's employment first initiative; provided, that the department may establish public-private partnerships with employers and non-profit organizations offering employment, job training, therapeutic day programs, recreational and other community-based day support services to individuals with disabilities; provided further, that such partnerships shall encourage the highest level of independence among individuals with disabilities as well as offering personalized day program planning and options to maximize community involvement and participation; and provided further, that the department shall issue a report, not later than December 31, 2015, to the house and senate committees on ways and means and the joint committee on children, families and persons with disabilities regarding the effectiveness of the program and detailing the number and types of transitions funded by the pilot program since its inception and in combination with the fiscal year 2015 reserve, including recommendations to improve or expand the program as applicable...”*

In accordance with the mandate stipulated above, the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) is submitting this progress report on the \$1 million dollars in pilot program funding that was provided in FY '16 in support of the Commonwealth's Employment First Initiative. More information about the goals and plans in the Department's Employment First Initiative can be found in the *“Blueprint for Success: Employing Individuals with Disabilities with Intellectual Disabilities in Massachusetts.”* In addition, a Blueprint Progress Report: *“Creating Conditions for Success”* was completed in October 2014 and is included for additional information on accomplishments and initiatives that support implementation of the Department's Employment First Initiative.

As described in the legislative report submitted in FY '15, the one million dollars in pilot program funding was allocated to three large community rehabilitation provider agencies: American Training, Inc. in Lawrence, MA; Lifeworks Employment Services in Norwood, MA; and Triangle, Inc. in Malden, MA. At that time these provider agencies were at different stages of service transformation and development as part of their plan to phase out the delivery of sheltered workshop services and expand integrated community employment opportunities and meaningful, inclusive community experiences through Community Based Day Support Programs. All had made significant progress in decreasing the number of individuals in sheltered workshop services, expanding service options, and assisting many individuals to transition to new employment and/or community based day support program services. As a result of this pilot program funding all three agencies successfully closed their sheltered workshop programs during FY '15: American Training in July 2014; Triangle, Inc. as of 1/31/15; and Lifeworks Employment Services, as of 6/30/15.

The funding each of these agencies received enabled them to provide more individualized services for individuals leaving the sheltered workshop to assist them to enter integrated employment at businesses in the community, either at an individual job or as part of a small group supported employment situation, and/or to participate in more inclusive volunteer, skill development and enrichment activities through Community Based Day Support services

(CBDS). These agencies continued to receive a portion of the \$1m in pilot funding in FY '16 to support the annualized cost of new service options for individuals who transitioned from their sheltered workshop programs in FY '15. See Table 1 below. The remaining funding for FY '16 has been allocated to three different provider agencies currently in the process of phasing out their sheltered workshop services and creating more integrated employment opportunities and community based day support program services. Information about these agencies is described further in the report.

**Table 1:**

<b>Agency</b>	<b>FY'15 Pilot Funding Amount</b>	<b>FY'16 Pilot Funding Amount</b>	<b>Total Number of People Served</b>	<b>Number in Individual Supported Employment 12/1/15*</b>	<b>Number in Group Supported Employment 12/1/15*</b>	<b>Number in CBDS Program Services 12/1/15*</b>
American Training	\$453,513	\$ 87,678	234	84	137	223
Lifeworks	\$170,058	\$136,025	260	101	122	205
Triangle	\$376,429	\$ 72,776	157	115	40	156
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$1,000,000</b>	<b>\$296,479</b>	<b>651</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>584</b>

**\*Note:** Many individuals participate in more than one of these services across the week, so these numbers represent a duplicated count of individuals participating in the corresponding service. Example: an individual may work at a part-time job three days/week and attend a Community Based Day Support program the other 2 days.

With this pilot program funding these providers have been able to hire additional personnel to enrich staffing ratios to strategically focus on developing new job placements, expand group supported employment opportunities, and develop a rich array of experiences offered through Community Based Day Support programs.

Agencies have been able to:

- Develop new business relationships; examples include: Amazon Fulfillment Center, Planet Self Storage, Sunrise Nursing Home, and Wegman's.
- Increase the number of individuals with intellectual disability successfully working at jobs at businesses in the community earning minimum wage or higher and receiving the same benefits as other employees,
- Offer innovative community based career exploration experiences through internships, including New Balance, and Project SEARCH at Northern Essex Community College.
- Offer a variety of volunteer opportunities through CBDS program services that provide individuals important experiences to explore different interests, develop skills, improve work habits, and build their resume, which can often be a pathway that leads to a job, while also contributing back to their community. A variety of health and wellness experiences are also offered through memberships at local YMCAs and gyms.
- Providers engage individuals and families in a variety of ways for input on program services and to get feedback on their satisfaction with services. This is approached in multiple ways including family meetings, annual outcome surveys, satisfaction surveys, newsletters, and as part of the Individual Supports Planning (ISP) process with each individual, their family/guardian, and other team members.

As expected, most individual who have transitioned from sheltered workshops are initially entering community based day support services as they benefit from the chance for a range of

different opportunities and experiences that will help inform future employment goals. All individuals will continue to be assisted to obtain an integrated job in the community based on their preferences and skills.

The remaining amount of pilot program funding for FY '16 (\$703,521) has been allocated to three additional provider agencies currently in the process of making the transition from sheltered workshop services to integrated employment and community based day services. These agencies are: The Northeast Arc in Danvers, MA; Road to Responsibility (RTR) in three different locations serving three local area offices, Plymouth, South Coastal and Brockton; and Sunshine Village in Chicopee, MA. It is expected that a total of 241 individuals will benefit from receiving new and enhanced service options with this pilot funding.

**Northeast Arc: Funding Allocation of \$175,000**

The Northeast Arc will use this funding to support new service options for 85 individuals who will be transitioning from their sheltered workshop services. They expect to completely phase out their sheltered workshop program by 6/30/16. One of the successful innovative services they have implemented is an internship program model, Project SEARCH, with Salem State University.

**Road to Responsibility (RTR): Funding Allocation of \$396,622**

RTR will use this funding to support new service options for 131 individuals who will be transitioning from their sheltered workshop services. They expect to completely phase out their sheltered workshop program by 6/30/16. To date they have provided new integrated employment opportunities and inclusive community based career exploration and enrichment experiences for 30 individuals. They have developed new internship options and increased the number of small group supported employment opportunities.

**Sunshine Village: Funding Allocation of \$131, 899**

Sunshine Village will use this funding to support new service options for 25 individuals who will be transitioning from their sheltered workshop services. They expect to completely phase out their sheltered workshop program by 6/30/16. Sunshine Village has developed several new integrated job opportunities for individuals, established new small group supported employment sites at businesses in the community and expanded the array of volunteer and career exploration experiences as part of their community based day support program.

In addition to the pilot program sites, with the additional \$2 million in FY '16 funding appropriated to support the Employment First initiative, since the beginning of the fiscal year there has been movement of 274 individuals into individual or small group integrated employment opportunities and/or community based day support services. As of 11/30/15, there are 576 individuals enrolled in sheltered workshop programs, either on a part-time or full-time basis, provided by fourteen provider agencies (Meditech - data source).

The Department, in partnership with the Institute for Community Inclusion/UMass Boston, has also invested in a variety of capacity-building activities for providers of sheltered workshop programs to help them develop the expertise and resources needed to offer quality integrated community employment services and inclusive community based day supports. These initiatives have been instrumental in the progress and success we have seen to date. This has included the provision of technical assistance/consultation to a total of 22 provider agencies, training and professional development for job developers and job coaches, and training and resources on best practices, with a strong focus on program design and development of inclusive community based services that serve as a pathway to employment. Additionally, six

Regional Employment Collaboratives have been established across the state. These Collaboratives, which have a cross-disability focus, are a partnership among state agencies, employers and employment provider agencies. Through the support of Employer Liaisons who work for the Collaboratives, they engage in broad outreach to the business community to help “open doors” and create access to new job opportunities. An important component of the Collaboratives is a Job developers Network which brings together job developers from the different provider agencies in the corresponding geographic region to share information and resources about employment opportunities and job leads. In FY’ 15 through the joint efforts of the Collaboratives, 449 individuals obtained new job opportunities, with 246 of these placements for individuals served by DDS. The provider agencies who have received this pilot funding have all been actively engaged with the Regional Employment Collaborative in their respective geographic areas.

In summary, tremendous progress has been made in assisting individuals to transition to integrated employment opportunities and inclusive, meaningful experiences in the community, and this pilot program funding has been instrumental in supporting these accomplishments. More individuals with intellectual disability are productive and contributing members of their communities as a result of these efforts. These accomplishments reflect positively on the hard work, efforts, and collaboration of all involved, employment providers, individuals with disabilities, families, employers, and DDS staff. The Department will continue to work with all parties to help support expansion of integrated employment opportunities at businesses in the community.