

Mass Workforce Issuance

Workforce Issuance No. 07- 49

Policy Information

To: Chief Elected Officials
Workforce Investment Board Chairs
Workforce Investment Board Directors
Title I Administrators
Career Center Directors
Title I Fiscal Officers
DCS Associate Directors
DCS Field Managers

cc: WIA State Partners

From: Jennifer James-Price, Undersecretary
Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development

David W. Mackley, Director
Department of Workforce Development

Date: July 26, 2007

Subject: **Educational Rewards Grant Program**

Purpose: To inform Local Workforce Investment Boards, One Stop Career Center Operators and other local workforce investment partners about the Educational Rewards Grant Program that funds grants of up to \$3,000 for a student seeking training in a high demand occupation. The Educational Rewards Grant program gives special attention to low-income working adults and displaced workers. In addition to paying for tuition, these flexible grants may be used to help with living expenses such as transportation and child care.

The expectation of the workforce system is to understand the program requirements and opportunities for customers, provide customers with program information, and provide potential applicants with necessary forms. Grant applications and administration of grant funding will be handled through financial aid offices at post-secondary institutions. Initial information on the Educational Rewards Grant Program was sent to One-Stop Career Center Directors by the Board of Higher Education at the beginning of July 2007. This Workforce Communication provides additional information and contact resources in post-secondary institutions (Attachment A) to better assist customers.

Background: The *Educational Rewards Grant Program* was established by the Legislature for the purpose of providing financial assistance to dislocated or incumbent workers to enable them to receive the education they need to transition into jobs in targeted high-demand occupations. The grant program emanates from the economic stimulus bill that is contained in Chapter 123 of the Acts of 2006 (Ch. 29 Sect. 2SSS of the M.G.L.). This need-based grant program is to serve as a last resort after all other federal and state financial aid resources have been exhausted in meeting postsecondary education enrollment costs. The Educational Rewards Grant Program also allows up to 30 percent of the award amount to be used by the student toward living expenses.

ELIGIBILITY:

Student applicants enrolled in an eligible program of study must meet the following criteria to be considered for an award under the Massachusetts Educational Rewards Grant Program:

- Shall be a dislocated worker or an individual whose income is at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level or meet other criteria as established by the Department of Workforce Development and the Board of Higher Education, in consultation with the Workforce Accountability Task Force.
- Has applied for financial aid using the standard Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and submitted necessary documentation to verify an income at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level.
- Is not in default of any federal or state student loans for attendance at any institution or owe a refund for any previous financial aid received.
- Is enrolled in a certificate or degree program and meets the institution's requirements for satisfactory academic progress.
- Is a Massachusetts resident domiciled in Massachusetts for at least one year prior to the beginning of the academic year.
- Is a United States citizen or eligible non-citizen under Federal Title IV regulations.

GRANT AWARD

The award under this program shall be a minimum of \$200 and a maximum of \$3,000 and shall be used to fund tuition, fees and books and may include up to 30 percent of the student's calculated cost of living as determined by the institution or the Board of Higher Education. The funds from this grant shall serve as a last resort, after other federal, state and institutional aid has been exhausted. To comply with this provision, institutions shall complete and submit to the Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance a detailed financial aid Cost of Attendance and a listing of all financial aid awarded. Institutions must also report the student's enrollment information as requested.

HOW TO APPLY

Students interested in applying for the Massachusetts Educational Rewards Grant Program must complete the following:

- Download and complete the Massachusetts Educational Rewards Grant Application.
 - [Educational Rewards Grant Program Application](#) (PDF: 99K)
 - [Educational Rewards Grant Program Publication](#) (PDF: 109K)
- Provide written proof that your income is at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level.
- File the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
 - [File](#) the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA).

Information and applications are also available at:

<http://www.osfa.mass.edu/default.asp?page=educationalRewardsGrant>

Action

Required:

Local workforce stakeholders and partners should ensure that all appropriate staff are informed of the content of this issuance.

The role of career center staff could be one or more of the following:

- Ensure customers are aware of the program.
- Make referrals to higher education admissions offices or financial aid offices (see **Attachment A for a list of public institutions' admissions offices or financial aid offices**). If a customer needs additional information about financial aid they can access it through www.osfa.mass.edu or by calling Phone: 617- 727-9420.
- Provide counseling / information regarding “high demand occupations” listed in the Educational Rewards Grant Program brochure.

Inquiries:

If you have further questions, please contact Dr. Clantha McCurdy, Vice Chancellor, Massachusetts Board of Higher Education. Dr. McCurdy can be reached at 617-727-1205.