

Mass Workforce Issuance

Workforce Issuance No. 07-68

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: Nancy Snyder, President
Commonwealth Corporation

David W. Mackley, Director
Department of Workforce Development

Date: October 17, 2007

Subject: “Bridging the Opportunity Gap” Request For Proposals

Purpose: To distribute “Bridging the Opportunity Gap: Department of Youth Services (DYS) Job Readiness and Employment Program” (formerly EET) Request For Proposals (RFP).

Background: The U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration (ETA) released Training & Employment and Guidance Letter No. 03-04 in July 2004 announcing ETA’s “New Strategic Vision for Youth Services”. Among the key strategies is a focus on the neediest youth, including youth involved with the juvenile justice system. Simultaneously, Massachusetts state agencies serving youth began a process to look at service connections for youth across systems, called *Pathways to Success by 21* (P21). To that end, in January 2005 Commonwealth Corporation and DYS co-sponsored, as part of the Title I Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Youth Forum series, a DYS-WIA forum that highlighted several of the promising practices in the Commonwealth that connect youth involved with the juvenile justice system to the Massachusetts workforce system.

In 2005 representatives from the Governor's Office of Administration and Finance (A&F), Department of Youth Services (DYS), Department of Workforce Development (DWD) and Commonwealth Corporation convened a group of Workforce Boards and One-Stop Career Center partners and other workforce development managers to discuss a proposed program model to connect DYS youth with employment and training, at the time a concept referred to as "Employment, Education & Training" (EET). Conceptually, EET was an effort to increase the connection of DYS youth to the workforce system. On October 27, 2006 the DWD re-convened a group of Career Center and LWIB leaders in Worcester, MA to provide an update on the progress of DYS funding for employment and training activities and to receive feedback with respect to various models to partner DYS and the workforce system. Since that time, funding and a new functional name for the project was established, "Bridging the Opportunity Gap: Department of Youth Services (DYS) Job Readiness and Employment Program". The feedback from the focus group meeting in Worcester was incorporated into the new RFP by the DYS leadership.

In 2006, the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services received \$900,000 in state funding from the Massachusetts State Legislature to meet the goals of this initiative. In order to promote a creative mix of pilot projects, two approaches were used to distribute this mix of vocational and employability funds. The first funding approach enabled each of the five regional DYS directors to identify and support vocational and employability efforts connected to their Community Reentry Centers. The other approach was a competitive grant process to encourage the development of workforce connections with workforce investment boards, career centers, community and faith based organizations and public vocational high schools.

In FY2007, through the "Bridging the Opportunity Gap" initiative, fourteen pilot programs were awarded funding, resulting in over 250 DYS clients being recruited and engaged in a range of career development and employability activities.

Commonwealth Corporation invites proposals from youth-serving organizations, including the sixteen Local Workforce Investment Boards in Massachusetts, One-Stop Career Centers, community based and/or non-profit organizations to undertake activities that create opportunities for effective career readiness that provide "bridges" to employment services for youth in the custody of the Department of Youth Services.

Grants awarded with respect to this current RFP will provide funding for job readiness, job training and employment services and engage and motivate youth who are in DYS custody and currently being served by DYS Community Re-entry Centers. Interested parties should review the application guidelines and consider submitting a proposal to the Commonwealth Corporation. Proposals are due on Friday, November 9, 2007 at 5:00 p.m. A total of approximately \$500,000 will be awarded through this proposal round and it is anticipated between six to eight grants will be made with a range between \$50,000 and \$70,000 each.

Action

Required: Please find attached the "Bridging the Opportunity Gap: Department Youth Services (DYS) Job Readiness and Employment Program" Request for Proposals (Attachment B) and accompanying invitation memo (Attachment A). Please review and disseminate to your local youth network.

Inquiries: Any questions regarding this RFP process should be directed to Nikki Bynoe, Program Manager at Commonwealth Corporation (nbynoe@commcorp.org) or 617-727-8158 ext. 1345.

Attachments: Attachment A: RFP Memo
Attachment B: Request for Proposals