

Mass Workforce Issuance

Workforce Issuance No. 09-13

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 Regional Managers

cc: WIA State Partners

From: Michael Taylor, Director
Department of Workforce Development

Date: March 23, 2009

Subject: **Funding Opportunity for the Development of Regional Collaboratives Focused on Competitive Employment of Individuals with Disabilities**

Purpose: To notify all Local Workforce Investment Boards, One-Stop Career Center Operators and other interested parties that the Massachusetts Disability Employment Initiative, funded by the MI-CEO Grant, has issued a solicitation on Comp-PASS for the development of four Regional Employment Collaboratives.

The solicitation can be found at:

<https://www.ebidsourcing.com/processPublicSolSummView.do?action=soltypeCd&docStatus=OPEN&docViewType=OPEN&docUserId=200186&doValidateToKen=false&docId=116000&soltypeCd=UNIVERSAL>

Background: *The Massachusetts Disability Employment Initiative (MA-DEI)* is a public/private partnership, bringing together Massachusetts state policy makers across Secretariats, employment service providers, employers, and people with disabilities to create an environment that maximizes work opportunities for people with disabilities and strengthens the MA workforce. Major partners in the MA-DEI include the Center for Health Policy and Research at UMass Medical School, the Institute for Community Inclusion at UMass Boston, and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services. The MA-DEI is funded by a grant from the Federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the

Massachusetts Medicaid Infrastructure and Comprehensive Employment Opportunities (MI-CEO) grant.

The MA-DEI is soliciting Letters of Intent from qualified entities to submit proposals to create, promote or enhance new or existing **Regional Employment Collaboratives** (hereafter referred to as ‘Collaboratives’) designed to facilitate the competitive employment of individuals with disabilities in Massachusetts through streamlined and coordinated employment service activities and effective business engagement. The results obtained from this initiative will be used to inform practices and policies regarding employment of people with disabilities and generate knowledge that can be replicated throughout the state. The MA-DEI will fund up to 4 Collaboratives in Massachusetts that propose to create or enhance a region’s capacity to achieve these employment goals.

Purpose of the Collaborative:

The purpose of a Collaborative is to improve competitive employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities through enhanced teamwork, communication and coordination among employment service providers, state agencies, employers, and people with disabilities within a defined region. For the purposes of this solicitation, employment service providers and state agencies includes *government sponsored employment service programs and agencies* that contribute to workforce development. In addition, a *competitive employment outcome* is defined as a job: 1) in a mainstream, integrated setting; 2) paid a prevailing wage directly by the employer; 3) not “set-aside” for a person with a disability; and 4) “owned” by the individual, not the provider agency.

Collaboratives must:

- 1) Aim to improve the employment outcomes of individuals with disabilities within a defined region in Massachusetts;
- 2) Establish partnerships among employment service providers to effectively engage with and meet the needs of businesses and employers;
- 3) Optimize partnerships with local workforce boards and Career Centers to enhance services to individuals with disabilities;
- 4) Identify clear processes for engaging local employers;
- 5) Use regional labor market data to inform the work of the Collaborative;
- 6) Work in partnership with the MA-DEI in technical assistance, training and evaluation activities related to the Collaborative.

Key outcomes to be achieved by a Collaborative may include: an increase in the number of people with disabilities employed; higher wages, receipt of employer benefits such as health insurance, and/or improved job retention rates among workers; and a broader variety of job opportunities for workers.

Collaboratives may choose to focus activities on one or more key goals related to employment for people with disabilities. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- improving the employment rate of youth with disabilities transitioning from school to work;
- Broadening the types of businesses and careers in which people with disabilities are employed;
- Establishing educational and job training opportunities for people with disabilities to prepare them for employment in higher wage jobs and/or emerging industries;

- Developing sector-specific training and/or placement initiatives to meet the needs of employers;
- Developing public/private partnerships for resource sharing and service efficiency;
- Building capacity in the employment services workforce through career development strategies such as mentoring.

Collaborative Membership

Qualified lead applicants include not-for-profit organizations and public agencies. Lead applicants must have experience providing employment services to people with disabilities and the ability to build and lead a cross-disability Collaborative. The lead applicant must have the capacity to contract with the UMass Medical School. Collaborative partners must include One Stop Career Centers and the local Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission office, and must have a strategy to engage community employment providers as part of the Collaborative. Other partners may include: businesses and/or business associations; other employment service providers; representatives from other public disability agencies such as the Massachusetts Commission of the Blind, the Department of Transitional Assistance, the Department of Developmental Services, and the Department of Mental Health; educational institutions and skills training programs; and consumer-operated and advocacy organization. Collaboratives are expected to be cross disability and include a plan to include individuals with disabilities in the development and implementation of the Collaborative's activities.

Anticipated Results

MA-DEI is interested in applicants that will demonstrate innovative and effective approaches to improving the employment rate of individuals with disabilities through a collaborative service delivery and business engagement model. Strong partnerships are expected to streamline practices associated with employer contact and job development, eliminate redundancy and improve the effectiveness of service delivery and employer engagement. To achieve these results, the Collaboratives will develop a comprehensive work plan including short and long term goals, strategies, timelines and anticipated outcomes.

To assist Collaboratives in achieving their goals, each Collaborative will be assigned a Technical Assistance Liaison from the MA-DEI who will work with the Collaborative throughout the life of the project. Collaboratives may also seek additional outside technical assistance and consultation as needed. Collaborative partners will also be expected to participate in training sessions offered through MA-DEI on job development and employer engagement, and to partner with the MA-DEI to evaluate the impact of the Collaboratives.

Letter of Intent Requirements

The Letter of Intent will:

- 1) Describe the Collaborative's broad goals;
- 2) List the names of individuals and organizations the lead applicants seeks to involve in the Collaborative (can be addressed in an attachment);
- 3) Describe the lead applicant's experience providing employment services to people with disabilities including current staff capacity, the ability to work with other service providers and state agencies within the region and to lead a cross-disability initiative;

- 4) Provide a description of the targeted region (catchment area, geographic boundaries);
- 5) Describe the types of businesses it will seek as partners and provide possible outreach strategies for business engagement;
- 6) Describe the individuals with disabilities the Collaborative intends to serve with a rationale for this selection;
- 7) Provide evidence of competence in developing or facilitating collaborations and/or administering grants and contracts.

The Letter of Intent may not exceed 4 typewritten pages (excluding Attachment), single-spaced, one-inch margins and 12-point font size. Letters of Intent must be signed by an authorized signatory within the lead applicant organization and are due March 27, 2009.

Regional Collaborative Application Process

A review committee comprised of MA-DEI staff and external representatives, including individuals with disabilities, will review all Letters of Intent.

Applicants will be notified of the results of the review process by April 8, 2009.

Up to 12 applicants will be selected from the Letter of Intent review and invited to submit a full proposal for funding of a Regional Employment Collaborative.

Those organizations will be invited to attend a Bidder's Conference on April 15th.

Proposals will be due May 15, 2009 and awards will be announced on or around May 29, 2009, with a start date of July 1, 2009.

Funding

The MA-DEI will award up to four grants. Each grant recipient will receive up to \$100,000 for the first funding period of July 1-December 31, 2009. First-year funding is intended to be used to plan and organize the Regional Employment Collaborative. Grant funds cannot be used to provide direct services or to pay for staff to deliver direct services. Grant funds shall be used for organizing, facilitating and maintaining the Collaborative. Sub-contracts and consultant agreements are allowable expenses under the solicitation. Up to \$200,000 per Collaborative is anticipated to be available for each of the next two years (CY 2010 and 2011) to carry out the Collaborative's activities. However, the awarding of these additional funds is contingent upon the availability of funds and Collaborative performance.

Timeline:

March 11, 2009	Notice of Solicitation of Regional Employment Collaboratives announced
March 27, 2009	Letters of Intent due
April 8, 2009	Finalists announced
April 15, 2009	Bidders Conference
May 15, 2009	Proposals due
May 29, 2009	Awards announced
July 1, 2009	Collaboratives start date

Required: The deadline for submitting Letters of Intent for this RFP is **March 27, 2009, by 2:00 p.m. (EDT)**.

Submitting Letters of Intent

Applicants must submit **three copies** of the Letter of Intent by **March 27, 2009 at 2:00 p.m.** E-mail and fax responses are not accepted. Letters of intent can be hand delivered or sent by express mail (UPS, FEDEX or other carrier).

Directions for hand delivery can be found on Page 5. Regular mail is not recommended as it takes longer than anticipated and applications are often late and therefore not accepted.

Responses must be submitted to:

Purchasing Department
University of Massachusetts Medical School
222 Maple Ave
Chang Bldg, CH1-109
Shrewsbury, MA 01545
508-856-6736

Proposal: The Massachusetts Disability Employment Initiative
Proposal Number: CW09-SC-0040-0001
Attention: Sue Christedes, Purchasing Agent I

Inquiries: For questions about this solicitation, please contact Sue Christedes at 508-856-6736 or at sue.christedes@umassmed.edu