

MASSACHUSETTS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

# Mass Workforce Issuance

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Policy  Information

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**To:** Chief Elected Officials  
Workforce Development Board Chairs  
Workforce Development Board Directors  
Title I Administrators  
Career Center Directors  
Title I Fiscal Officers  
DCS Operations Managers

**cc:** WIOA State Partners

**From:** Alice Sweeney, Director  
Department of Career Services

Nancy Snyder, President  
Commonwealth Corporation

**Date:** September 13, 2016

**Subject:** **Mass Talent Connect 2016 - Revised**

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**Purpose:** To notify Local Workforce Development Boards, One-Stop Career Center Operators and other workforce investment partners of available funds for training and education, intensive services and support services to assist long-term unemployed through *Mass Talent Connect*.

**Background:** *Mass Talent Connect* is an intensive and coordinated service delivery strategy intended to help long-term unemployed individuals reconnect to the labor market. Through *Mass Talent Connect*, long-term unemployed individuals will be offered workshops, resources and assessment tools designed to enhance their skills and increase opportunities for employment. Long-term unemployed individuals who participate in *Mass Talent Connect* will be assisted with updating their skills through occupational skills training and educational services and have the opportunity to connect to potential employment through intensive job search, networking, internships, on-the-job training and apprenticeship programs. *Mass Talent Connect* is a service delivery strategy targeted to serving individuals who have been unemployed 30 weeks or longer (priority given to those unemployed

one year or longer) with customized services that enhance the employability of each customer.

**Eligibility and Enrollment:** *Mass Talent Connect* participant eligibility will require that the participant be long term unemployed. Individuals must have been unemployed 30 weeks or longer and capable of, available, and actively seeking work (priority given to those unemployed one year or longer).

Customers must hold U.S. Citizenship or Authorization to work in the U.S. and must be Selective Service compliant.

Once eligibility has been determined the customer may be enrolled in *Mass Talent Connect* (see Attachment A for MOSES tracking).

**Assessment:** To qualify for *Mass Talent Connect* voucher funds, eligible customers MUST receive the following skills assessment workshops at a minimum:

Assessment systems that will be utilized by *Mass Talent Connect* job seekers include Transferable Occupation Relationship Quotient (TORQ) and Career Readiness 101. Both of these assessment tools are designed to be individualized and have been proven effective in working with individuals across a range of experience and educational levels.

Career Readiness 101 is a comprehensive learning system promoting sustained success by encouraging career exploration, positive work behaviors, and greater capacity to develop resumes, conduct job searches, and succeed in interviews. TORQ allows the job seeker to take their transferable skills to the next step for career exploration/options.

It is expected that staff will assist customers in utilizing and/or reviewing the assessment outcomes to help the customer in determining appropriate next steps toward reemployment.

***Mass Talent Connect Workshops:*** To qualify for *Mass Talent Connect* voucher funds, eligible customers MUST attend or have attended at least one of the workshops specifically offered at the local Career Center which targets and addresses the barriers faced by the long term unemployed.

In order for DCS to track this requirement local Career Centers must include (MTC) in the Event Description (see Attachment A for MOSES tracking).

**Career Planning:** Each *Mass Talent Connect* trainee will develop a career plan in a manner consistent with Career Planning under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Customers will have access to basic and individualized career services to prepare for re-entry into the labor market.

In addition, some of these customers may also require education and/or training services.

For training participants, including those participating in an OJT or other work-based (Apprenticeship, internship, paid or unpaid work experience) training, there is an expectation of consistent, ongoing communication between appropriate Career Center staff, the trainee and the employer. It is strongly recommended that a visit to the job site be conducted during the first two weeks of the training period and once a month thereafter, to ensure that the all contracted elements are in place.

**In-Depth Job Search Coaching:** It is expected that *Mass Talent Connect* enrollees will receive comprehensive, individualized job search coaching/assistance. Through this process enrollees will evaluate a wide range of career factors, including talents, aptitudes, interests, values and more, and will be assisted to discover the career that's the right fit for them. Methodologies can include coaching on:

- how to stand out among others
- how to eliminate nervousness
- project confidence and communicate effectively
- how to answer behavioral, situational, & stress questions

Strategies can also include:

- mock interviews
- questions to expect and best answers
- proper body language and energy
- how to explain gaps of employment & job changes

**Training:** The following is a list of current training capacity already in place to serve long-term unemployed individuals and other targeted groups. These resources include:

- Occupational training supported through U.S. DOL grants with programs in advanced manufacturing in multiple regions of the state;
- On-the-job training supported through U.S. DOL grants or WIOA Title I formula funds that support a training position with a formal training plan at a business;
- Apprenticeship opportunities;
- Career Readiness 101 Certification and KeyTrain resources to improve skills;
- Occupational training supported through individual training accounts for training provided by vendors on the Eligible Training Provider List;
- Guided pathway programs developed through the GPSTEM project that is administered by community colleges through a US DOL grant;
- Training supported by industry for targeted employment opportunities;
- The Department of Higher Education TRAIN Grant Program (please refer to separate [Massachusetts Workforce Informational Issuance #25-133](#) and see Attachment A for MOSES tracking). If a customer participates in a TRAIN program staff should add the specific funding source *Talent Connect* to the COURSE record and complete the normal enrollment steps into training via

the Course Activity tab (this will allow for the tracking of TRAIN program participants performance); and

- Access to training through regional Sector-based partnerships funded through the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund.

In addition, other state resources will support:

- OJT Training supported through the Workforce Training Fund Program (WTFP). Guidance particular to these resources will be sent under separate cover.

Career Center Specific Programs were created in MOSES to track individuals who enroll in a WTFP OJT (see Attachment A for MOSES tracking).

**Life Coaching Services:** Workshops are being developed for staff and for staff to deliver to customers.

Workshops will be delivered to train Career Center staff to present workshops on the psychological effects of being long-term unemployed and staff will subsequently provide advice and support on effective strategies to support job seekers who are long-term unemployed and continue to be in transition.

Staff will be supported on how to relate to, address and overcome with customers, obstacles (real or imaginary), that may inhibit them in the career planning process to seek and secure suitable work. Workshops will teach staff how to incorporate these elements into the facets of their counselor/job specialist role that addresses long-term unemployed job seekers needs.

**Support Services:** \$45,000 in *Mass Talent Connect* funds have been reserved to assist with the support service needs of participating trainees. Support Services shall be available to eligible participants based on funding availability and in accordance with the pertinent local area's Support Services Policy.

A maximum limit of \$300 per trainee has been established to assist with services such as transportation, child care, housing, dependent care, medical care and job-related tool and uniform costs necessary to enable an individual to participate in *Mass Talent Connect* workshops, training, etc.

Each local area shall ensure non-duplication of support service payments (i.e. TRAIN also offers support-type service stipends) and shall self-attest that the payment is not duplicative in nature and is in compliance with the local approved policy.

Support Services will be paid "up front" by the local area either to the individual directly or to a third-party provider in a manner consistent with the area's local policy. The local area shall subsequently invoice the Regional Employment Board of Hampden County (REBHC) for Support Services reimbursement (up to the \$300 project maximum).

If local policy limits support services to an amount that is less than the \$300 maximum for this project, local policy prevails. If the local policy establishes a payment limit that is greater than or equal to the project's \$300 individual limit for support service payments, the local area may cover the full amount with local funds, and may request reimbursement from Hampden for up to the \$300 project limit. In order to receive reimbursement for paid Support Services, local operators must please complete and submit Attachment E: Mass Talent Connect Support Services Cash Request Form.

**Job Development/Placement:** Successful completion of the *Mass Talent Connect* Program will result in full-time, unsubsidized employment. It is the responsibility of the Career Center to contact the employer to verify entered employment. The Career Center will also be responsible for documenting retention in employment up to 12 months after the first day of employment. All retention and follow-up must be entered into the MOSES data system. It is expected that the Career Center will have a menu of post-placement services available to all interested customers who have been exited.

In a case where the OJT does not result in job placement for the trainee, Career Center staff will provide ongoing assistance from the Career Center to facilitate the job search according to Career Center standard operating procedures and the trainee's Career Plan.

Follow-up services can consist of retention workshops, events, networking groups, mini-trainings, advocacy and referral services, or any other service which would be valued by an employed customer. The Career Center must track utilization of the services, including all contacts made to the exited customer throughout the follow-up period, in MOSES.

**Reporting:** The Career Center will be required to maintain an electronic record of activities and results in the MOSES computer data system, following procedures established by DCS. Information in the MOSES system will encompass eligibility determination, basic, individualized and follow-up service delivery, enrollment, career planning, training and job placement for all customers enrolled in *Mass Talent Connect*. Information must be entered timely and accurate. The data collected by the Career Centers will be used to document performance results for *Mass Talent Connect* at the overall project level as well as at the local Career Center level.

**Exits:** Following completion of activities funded through project and 90 days of no services (excluding follow-up services), trainees will be auto exited from the *Mass Talent Connect* grant.

**Vouchering:** All local Workforce Areas are eligible to receive voucher payments for providing individualized and follow-up services to *Mass Talent Connect* enrollees. Voucher reimbursement payments will be made to the local area only for non-training individualized career services provided by the local One-Stop Career Center system (the WTFP OJT will be paid separately). The REBHC will

remit payment to the Career Center's fiscal agent upon receipt of the voucher payment invoice.

The Regional Employment Board of Hampden County has been designated to implement the project. REBHC will follow a common contract/vouchering process utilizing standard forms; the Master Agreement, that is based on the Commonwealth's OJT vouchering model to assure access and participation on the part of each of the Commonwealth's sixteen workforce areas and to provide statewide access for participants to On-the-Job Training (OJT) opportunities.

Any local area that has not executed a Master Agreement with the REBHC by November 1, 2016 will forfeit access to voucher payments described above. No voucher payments will be issued prior to execution of a Master Agreement.

Voucher payments are made to the local area for assessment, enrollment, training plan development, career planning and follow-up.

- An invoice for a voucher payment may be submitted only upon confirmation by the REBHC that a contract has been executed
- Eligibility requirements as described above have been met (complete and submit Attachment C: Massachusetts Talent Connect Justification Form)
- Assessment requirements as described above have been met
- Enrollment has been completed in the *Mass Talent Connect* Project

The Mass Talent Connect Local Area Voucher Invoice Cash Request Form (Attachment D) is to be submitted to the REBHC.

The Commonwealth apportioned the available vouchers to each local area. There remains a pool of vouchers available to local areas on a first-come first-serve basis. The value of each voucher is \$1,137.60. See Attachment B for more information on voucher availability.

Incomplete or inaccurate invoices will be returned to the local fiscal agent for correction.

***Mass Talent Connect Website:*** Please go to [www.mass.gov/dcs/talentconnect](http://www.mass.gov/dcs/talentconnect)

- Job seekers can use assessment tools, resume development tools and access job banks;
- Job seekers can find the location of career coaches and make appointments for an initial meeting;
- Job seekers can access JobQuest and the eligible training provider list;
- The site provides general information about *Mass Talent Connect*.

**MOSES Tracking and Performance:** The following performance outcomes will be monitored and reported.

- Enrollments (see Attachment A for MOSES tracking)

- Workshops/Services - what workshops and services did customers attend during their participation
- Training Referrals – (see Attachment A for MOSES tracking) how many training referrals were made for those enrolled
- Training Enrollments – i.e. how many, what types (ITA, OJT, etc.) and what were the outcomes (i.e. complete, did not complete)
- Obtained Employment
- Retention/Follow-Up

Commonwealth Corporation will do an evaluation on the project. The evaluation will include an analysis of the performance outcomes of TC participants. Proposed evaluation activities are dependent upon the availability and completeness of participant data and on the timing of enrollments and outcomes within the negotiated performance period of the evaluation. It is critical to ensure that data such as demographics and characteristics are as complete as possible, that the work history is updated or reviewed to ensure that it reflects correct data elements including the end date(s) of employment in order that analysis of weeks unemployed can be evaluated.

**Action**

**Required:** Please ensure that all Career Center staff are aware of the *Mass Talent Connect* Program and funding available for training and education assistance for long-term unemployed individuals.

**Effective:** Immediately

**Inquiries:** Please email questions to Beth Goguen,  
[Elizabeth.M.Goguen@MassMail.State.MA.US](mailto:Elizabeth.M.Goguen@MassMail.State.MA.US)

**Attachments:** A. *Mass Talent Connect* Tracking in MOSES  
 B. Voucher Availability – Allocation of Slots and Potential Funding  
 C. Massachusetts Talent Connect Justification Form  
 D. Mass Talent Connect Local Area Voucher Invoice Cash Request Form  
 E. Mass Talent Connect Support Services Cash Request Form