

SRC Business and Employment Opportunity (BEO) Committee
Meeting Minutes
10/9/2025

Attendees:

- Stephen LaMaster
- Mike Higgins
- Toni Wolf
- Jeff Roberge
- Charlie Powderly
- Sarah Wiles
- Joseph Reale
- Joe Bellil
- Kristianne Widman
- Heather Wood
- Jason Alves

Items needing approval:

- August 2025 Meeting Minutes
 - i. Sent to regular committee members. It can be sent to additional folks as needed.
 - ii. Motion to approve by Joe Bellil, second motion by Heather Wood.
Meeting minutes approved 10/9/2025
- September 2025 Meeting Minutes
 - i. Motion to approve by Joe Bellil, second motion by Heather Wood.
Meeting minutes approved 10/9/2025

Review of Recommendations:

The Business and Employment Opportunity Committee is advising MassAbility on 3 State Plan Recommendations over FY 2026:

- *The Business Employment and Opportunity (BEO) Committee will work with MassAbility to make available instructional materials relevant to MBY participants by becoming certified holders of the Disability Employment Tax Credit (DETC). The Committee will advise MassAbility on strategies for marketing the DETC to participants, vendors and employers.*
 - a. How to best provide information to Career Service vendors to promote the initiative to both employers and job seekers**

- Utilize Regional employment collaboratives through word of mouth and getting on agendas.
- Create a recorded webinar that could be recorded and used statewide. Some organizations/ collaboratives have their own secured/private YouTube channel for where vendors can access the information.
- Posting on collaborative/ organizational websites including supplemental recorded materials.
- Include Tax credit information/ where to find the information at job network development meetings as a rotating agenda item.
- Information can be posted on MassAbility website once developed (as well as ICI and Riverside Collaborative). Other collaboratives can have a link that leads them to the MassAbility website.
- (Jeff Gentry- Jgentry@jvs-boston.org) Jewish vocational services could be another partner to assist with this (Kristianne)- figuring out how MASSAPse fits into this dissemination plan.
- MassAbility business improvement group could send this information to all MassAbility service providers and vendors (JPS/BRS group). Joseph Reale and colleagues believe best process is having Business Relationship Specialists and Job Placement Specialists would be the right avenue.
 - Need distribution process consistent to help answer questions about the tax credit and process.
- Some of the local workforce organizations could communicate to the small businesses and business associations, city workforce development/ or disability committees on the municipal level.
- Explore/ develop a connection with local tax preparation organizations, as all businesses need to file taxes. Additionally, it creates connections with local payrolls, or HR departments.
- We could create an electronic package as part of marketing the tax credit to vendors and suppliers.
- ECBA has a monthly morning meeting has people from the employment community join, MassAbility could put together a presentation that would help discern the best marketing methods. A lot of small businesses are involved in this. (10-minute presentation)
- Attend better business bureau meetings.
- Benna Plan (work without limits) could add a task force to assist with this.
- MassHire career centers and the workforce boards. Within the career centers is the business service reps who have a rapid response team. 16 workforce boards across the commonwealth. Chambers of commerce.
- Challenges with distributing information may be:

- Distributing to small businesses vs. large businesses, smaller businesses have less bandwidth/ staff to support application process and follow through.
- Department of revenue is still working out the process of the credit due to the employer. At present employers are asking a lot of questions about this process, and certificates.
- b. Explore with MBY the viability of certifying people during initial enrollment in career-related services**
- MassAbility has been taxed by the Dept. of Revenue to get the tax credit out.
 - Can MBY make this part of their initial application/ enrollment phase?
 - MassAbility utilizes MassAbility Connect- Commissioner spoke with team and the hesitation is participant going through the process might not understand what they're signing up for. This could be something done with the Job Placement specialist when individuals are ready to explore work/ get hired.
- *The Business Employment and Opportunity (BEO) Committee will advise and partner with MassAbility in ongoing efforts to improve self-employment supports based upon national best practices.*
- *The Business Employment and Opportunity (BEO) Committee will advise MassAbility on additional efforts to engage additional employers to support hiring people with disabilities in the commonwealth.*

Jeff Roberge (Business Relations Director):

- Previous Background- started at 7 hills foundations and oversaw employment programs. Then moved to Mass Rehab as the Fitchburg and West regional Director. Then served as the director of work force development with MassHire.
- Vision- develop more employer networks.
- Priority- to better align MassAbility with regional blueprints.
 - Align the business services units with the priority industries among the region and assist with developing connections to specified workforce training programs.
 - Redefine/ Establish short-term certification programs that provide folks we serve with opportunities to be quickly trained in a priority industry and lead to successful employment outcomes.
- Exploring service and training payment methods through department of labor can help offset the budget cuts currently happening across the state and utilize work trust funds.
- Sharing back with this committee over the course of time will be helpful BEO (jeff come back to share)
- Develop training programs in partnership with employers.

- Looking for at least 2 employers to develop on the job training programs and driven by the employer themselves.
- Utilize new software that allows Business relations specialist to research the next generation of employment.
- Have employers commit to hiring participants going through the training programs.
- A lot of these programs already exist, and we just need to tap into the competitive trust fund grants. MassAbility has evolved on the periphery and now has the option to become a partner of these programs/ grants.
- Shortening training programs to between 6, 8, 10, or 12 weeks with 2-3 cohorts a year.
- Jeff wrote the central region workforce blueprint and understood that there are multiple blueprints throughout the state that highlight the priority employment needs per industry.
- Within the blueprints there is a structure for entry level and career latter related.
- Jeff has access to Realtime job market data through the department of labor website and other resources to help guide this re-alignment.

Next BEO meeting December 11, 2025 @ 1:00 PM

- Business One-pager anticipated to be completed by 10/10/2025