

Training Resources and Internship Networks (TRAIN) Grant Program

Community College Workforce Development

Request for Proposals



Issued by:

**Massachusetts Department of Higher Education
One Ashburton Place, Room 1401
Boston, Massachusetts 02108**

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I. Background

It has been ten years since the 2008 Global Financial Crisis/Great Recession began to displace many Massachusetts workers from long-tenured jobs, too often resulting in extended periods of unemployment. Unfortunately, despite a greatly strengthened economy, some adult workers continue to face jarring career transitions and the potential for extended periods of unemployment while others confront the challenge of securing their first job in Massachusetts knowledge-based economy.

Adult workers are sometimes displaced from jobs due to global competition while others face accelerating technology disruptions that make it difficult, if not impossible, to keep current with the rapidly advancing tools of industry. Some new entrants to our community arrive with foreign credentials that don't easily transfer while others lack sufficient basic education (English literacy, numeracy, sciences) and a cultural awareness of the expectations for work place readiness to attain a first job.

The Training Resources and Internship Network (TRAIN) grant program of 2016 was launched to engage long-term unemployed adults, offering foundational education programs, wrap-around support services and industry specific skills-training that would enable entry or reentry into the workforce. Many successful training and employment outcomes resulted from this first implementation¹. The TRAIN program of 2018 has been updated to address current employment realities will address an even broader scope of adult workforce challenges and opportunities.

II. Grant Purpose and Priorities

With now record-low unemployment rates, employers face the challenge of identifying and hiring enough skilled workers to fill available job openings. While graduates of vocational high schools, community colleges and state universities address a significant percentage of the talent pipeline, challenges persist for adult workers who seek to attain family sustaining careers in key industries such as Healthcare, Information Technology,

¹ Final Project Report, October 2017

Advanced Manufacturing and Hospitality and Tourism. These industry sectors have been prioritized by the Workforce Skills Cabinet and defined in Regional Blue Print and Labor Market planning documents (<https://www.mass.gov/regional-workforce-skills-planning-initiative>).

Massachusetts is experiencing a skills gap – available jobs with high employer demand, strong wages and career advancement opportunities are going unfilled while too many workers remain unemployed or underemployed. The Department of Higher Education (DHE), working in collaboration with the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development² (EOLWD) is charged with soliciting grant proposals from community colleges in partnership with One-Stop Career Centers (OSCC), Workforce Development Boards (WDB's), educational partners, and Community-Based Organizations (CBO's) to address this need. Proposed projects shall address the needs of eligible candidates for (1) education foundations in English literacy, numeracy and sciences, (2) work place readiness training, (3) employer sponsored apprenticeships, internships, or other models of work-based experiential learning, (4) industry sector and occupational skill training and (5) career advisement and job placement services.

III. Required Qualifications

Lead applicants for TRAIN grant awards must be one of Massachusetts fifteen community colleges. As the lead applicant, the community colleges are expected to collaborate with local employers, OSCC's, WDB's and CBO's in partnership and as appropriate through sub-contracts to distribute funding for support services and program activities. Community colleges may apply for the grant individually or in partnership with other colleges and institutions across the region as identified by the Workforce Skills Cabinet Regional Planning Blue Print.

IV. Program Design

The TRAIN program seeks to support the long-term unemployed, under-employed and new entrant adult workers who seek to enter/reenter the workforce by providing

² EOLWD is the lead agency for the Workforce Skills Cabinet,

eligible individuals with a comprehensive program of training and wrap around support services designed to result in meaningful employment.

Proposals must document sufficient regional employer hiring demand to recruit and potentially hire prospective completers of the TRAIN grant proposals

Eligible students and employers shall not incur any costs for participation in TRAIN.

A. Participants

Long-term unemployed workers, underemployed workers (based on family sustainable wages or constrained career progression opportunities) and prospective adult workers (new entrants lacking recent and relevant workplace experience in key employment sectors and occupations prioritized in the Workforce Skills Cabinet Regional Planning Blue Prints) are eligible to participate in the TRAIN program. Eligibility shall be prioritized on the basis of (1) extended unemployment as determined by the Unemployment Insurance (UI) system or otherwise by the partner OSCC, (2) insufficient basic skills preparation (English literacy, numeracy, sciences) based on standard workforce development assessment instruments administered by the partner OSSC, community college or community based organization, (3) cultural deficits related to workplace readiness (awareness of employers expectations for a professional workforce, e.g. promptness and dependability, written and oral communication, teamwork and collaboration), and (4) industry skills preparation as determined by employer minimum hiring criteria and assessments.

Participants must also demonstrate their eligibility for employment in key industry sectors as guided by standard employment practices within those sectors.

B. Design Elements

Education Foundations

Basic proficiency in English literacy, numeracy and the sciences are essential for nearly all jobs in Massachusetts but especially so for high demand occupations in priority industry sectors such as Healthcare, Manufacturing, Information Technology and some elements of the Hospitality and Tourism industry. These sectors offer family sustaining wages and career progression opportunities in every region of the Commonwealth for workers with a strong, basic education foundation. Proposals for TRAIN grants should include plans to evaluate candidates using standard education and workforce assessment instruments and determine gaps to be addressed. The proposed program should provide remedial or co-requisite and contextualized academic coursework and study materials to address subject matter deficiencies.

Work Place Readiness

The work place readiness needs of the long-term unemployed, underemployed and new entrant workers are varied. Some workers will have extensive experience in the contemporary work place and will be familiar with cultural norms and employer expectations for success. Such workers may need to focus on upgrading their technical skills or knowledge related to the current state of the industry sector they choose to address rather than basic readiness. Other workers may have little to no awareness of work place norms and professional workforce expectations such as promptness and dependability, written and oral communication, teamwork and collaboration. In these cases, contextualized classroom instruction, role-play scenarios and interviewing techniques that emphasize work place norms of behavior and attire, communication and collaboration, teamwork, data and information application and more, should prove beneficial.

Proposals should leverage the knowledge, experience and lessons learned from prior programs designed to serve the target constituencies. Collaboration among

community colleges, One Stop Career Centers (OSSC's), Workforce Development Boards (WDB's), Regional Vocational/Technical schools and community-based organizations (CBO's) should be a featured element of TRAIN grant proposals.

Internships, apprenticeships, experiential learning

Partnerships with regional employers to place TRAIN participants in employer-sponsored internships, apprenticeships or other forms of experiential learning is a required element of the TRAIN program as research³ shows that internships provide participants with increased employment opportunities and additional marketable skills such as time management, written and oral communication, critical thinking, and self-discipline. **Applicants must provide at least one letter of commitment from a local employer, demonstrating the capacity of the proposal to secure internship placements.**

High-quality employer-sponsored internships, apprenticeships or other forms of experiential learning are based on relationships where all parties (student, employer, school) mutually benefit and should reflect the following:

- Clearly expressed job description, work expectations and responsibilities
- Assigns mentors or supervisors to give guidance, evaluate performance and provide feedback
- Reinforces learned skills while heightening career awareness and vocational opportunities
- Lasts over the timeframe of the intern's TRAIN program
- Articulates to post-internship employment

For students, the benefits include:

- Improved knowledge and skills,
- Improved work habits,

³ Knouse, Stephen B., Tanner, John T., Harris, Elizabeth W., "The Relation of College Internships, College Performance, and Subsequent Job Opportunity." *Journal of Employment Counseling*, 00220787, Mar99, Vol. 36, Issue 1

- Increased personal and social efficacy,
- Marketable job experience, and
- Articulated pathways leading to employment

For businesses, the benefits include:

- Increased workforce capacity,
- Recruiting advantage – low risk, in-depth first look at prospective employees,
- Opportunity to begin pre-development of interns as new employees, and
- Potential for “fresh approaches” or new ideas

And for schools, the benefits include:

- Bridging education to supplement and complement classroom pedagogy,
- Demonstrated success in preparing students for jobs,
- Improved job placement numbers and
- Improved relationship with employers⁴

C. Stipends

Given the criteria that eligible candidates for TRAIN will be unemployed, underemployed or new entrants to the Massachusetts workforce, some form of financial and/or wrap-around services will likely be necessary to recruit and subsequently support individuals through to successful completion of this program. In the first iteration of TRAIN, stipends were proposed to be paid directly to participants to offset associated program participation costs or other related expenses. However, this strategy proved complex and ultimately ineffective. Therefore, qualifying proposals for this implementation of the TRAIN program shall propose a suite of academic and support services to promote student success supported by grant funding awarded to community colleges and

⁴ Carl P. Maertz Jr, Philipp A. Stoeberl and Jill Marks, “*Building successful internships: lessons from the research for interns, schools, and employers*” John Cook School of Business, St Louis University, St Louis, Missouri, USA

partner institutions. As necessary and deemed feasible, stipends paid directly to participants are still allowable as a form of program supports.

D. Candidate Recruitment

Applicant community colleges working in collaboration and through sub-contracts with OSSC's, WDB's and CBO's are to conduct outreach and identify, engage, assess, recruit and enroll eligible candidate for participation in this initiative. Recruiting strategies conducted by applicant partners may include but are not limited to:

- Open House events
- Informational tables at job fairs or career awareness events
- Promotional literature such as posters and flyers prominently displayed at all applicant partner organizations
- Website advertisement

V. Submission Requirements

A. Project Abstract

Not more than one page. Include the following:

Lead Applicant Information:

- Community College
- Contact Person
- Title
- Telephone Number
- Email Address

Names and roles of other committed partner organizations:

- Please include letters of commitments from collaborating partners which should minimally include one OSCC and one employer

Summary description of the project, including:

- Projected number of long-term unemployed, underemployed and new entrant adult workers to be served (enroll, retain, complete and interview for a job)
- Academic training coursework description (e.g. basic knowledge and skills) and advanced industry sector knowledge and skills (e.g. Manufacturing, Health Care, Information Technology and Hospitality and Tourism)
- Work place readiness training courses and activities descriptions
- Internship, apprenticeship or other experiential learning placements (provide employer name and contact information)
- Target outcomes for academic training, work place readiness training and internship, apprenticeship or other experiential learning
- Project timeline (start, intermediate and completion milestones)
- Key project personnel and summary of their background and experience
- Employer and/or campus proposed matching funds (encouraged but not required).
- Amount of the grant request
- Budget and Budget Narrative

B. Project Narrative**Recruiting**

Describe the methods that will be used to recruit eligible students, the role of employers in this process and whether specific populations (i.e. unemployed, underemployed, new entrant) will receive special focus.

Academic, Work Place Readiness and Industry Skills Training

This section should describe training program design, content focus and delivery modalities:

- Describe the training objectives to be achieved during the project period

- Instructional format, i.e. classroom, campus-based, onsite, online, hybrid
- Adult student learning needs addressed through experiential learning, tryout employment, etc.
- Start and end dates of training and/or number of cycles of training, as well as required minimum hours per week, length and schedule of training
- Credit, non-credit training or a combination of both
- Credentials earned upon completion of the training
- Certification testing as a prerequisite for employment
- Role of partners, if any, in the delivery of training, e.g. other postsecondary institutions, One Stop Career Centers, WDB's, vocational technical schools, community-based organizations, etc.
- Sustainable capabilities and capacities that will be developed and maintained in the region because of this project

Wrap-around Support Services

Describe the categories of wrap-around support services to be provided and how they will promote adult student success. The following should not be considered an exclusive list but rather, examples of wrap-around support services:

- Housing
- Child Care
- Transportation
- Financial Literacy
- Life skills training
- Financial literacy instruction
- SORI/CORI checks
- Case management
- Tutoring/Mentoring
- Job search assistance
- Job and Career Advising

- Certification Preparation
- Certification/Initial Licensing Fees

Internships, apprenticeships, experiential learning

Address the employer relationship/involvement with the program by describing the internship, apprenticeship, experiential learning opportunities and how these learning experiences will prepare participants to meet the program objectives, including:

- How the experiential learning aligns and reinforces the program's workforce readiness and skills training programs.
- How experiential learning benefits the students, employers and community colleges.
- The role of mentors and supervisors for guiding intern trainees, assessing performance and providing feedback.
- The expected length of the experiential learning opportunity.
- The possibility of jobs for hire after completing the internship.

Program Measures and Outcomes

This section should describe the expected outcomes from the program proposal including, but not limited to:

- The number of participants who will begin the program
- The number of program completers including certifications attained
- The projected and committed number of students to be placed in experiential learning opportunities
- The number of businesses providing experiential learning opportunities to participants, the number of student placements and a description of the training received by participants through these placements
- The number of participants who received full-time employment within 6 months of completing the program.

- The cost per participant reflecting the services provided for Long-Term Unemployed workers, Under-Employed workers and Prospective Adult workers.

VI. Evaluation & Reporting

Project proposals will demonstrate a strong commitment to formative, and summative evaluation protocols. Grant funds may be requested to support ongoing project evaluations or for a new evaluation implementation. Funds for evaluation should not exceed 5% of the grant total.

Final status reports will be due September 28, 2019. All written reports should include the following elements:

- Narrative of project implementation - successes as well as unanticipated challenges and how you addressed those challenges.
- Evaluation report of the program/project's effectiveness and quantifiable outcomes. Include best practices and highlights.
- Partner involvement and activities executed
- Expense Report (budget/actual)

VII. Budget Information

A proposed budget is required and must reflect expenses finalized by the end of the FY19 fiscal year. Please fill out the attached budget template. In addition, please include a detailed explanatory budget narrative that supports each line of your detailed budget request.

Be sure to also include supporting detail regarding any employer match, as well as any match from the college itself. It is not a requirement of this program that matching funds be included with the proposal although matching funds are encouraged.

VIII. Submission Instructions and Timeline

Open Market Bid BD-19-1088-RGT01-RGT01-29743

Proposals will be accepted no later than 12:00 Noon September 21, 2018. Proposals should be formatted not to exceed 10 pages, with standard 1" margins, 1.5 line spacing and 11-point font. Appendices are permitted and do not count in the 10-page total.

An information session will be held by conference call on August 21, 2018 to respond to questions about the RFP. Information regarding the exact time and call-in number will be posted on CommBuys and the Department of Higher Education (DHE) website found here: http://www.mass.edu/strategic/work_train.asp. Anyone interested in participating should send an email to David Cedrone, Associate Commissioner – Workforce Development (DHE), at dcedrone@dhe.mass.edu. FAQs and responses will be posted to the TRAIN section of the DHE website, as well as on CommBuys, after the session is completed.

RFP Timeline	
Release Date	July 27, 2018
Information Session	August 21, 2018
Final Date for RFP questions	August 31, 2018
Proposals Due	September 21, 2018 12:00 Noon
Grants Awarded	October 26, 2018
Interim Report Due	March 29, 2019
Project completion	June 30, 2019
Final Report Due	September 28, 2019

Responses MUST be uploaded (as one single document) to COMMBUYS no later than the bid opening date and time: 12:00 Noon, September 21, 2018. Responses not posted to COMMBUYS will not be considered for evaluation. Do not Email and/or mail responses to the department.

BIDDERS IMPORTANT NOTE: When uploading your response on COMMBUYS please be sure to enter a zero-dollar amount and check off the “no charge” (Make sure “No

Bid” is NOT selected) option, otherwise your upload will default to the No Bid option and the department will not be made aware of the upload. This step will ensure accuracy when the bid closes for review and the department awards the bid. Failure to follow this step may result in disqualification of your response due to the department not being properly notified of your response.

To respond to this bid, please register on the COMMBUYS website. If you need assistance registering, please contact the COMMBUYS helpdesk at: COMMBUYS@state.ma.us or (888) 627-8283 or (617) 720-3197.

IX. Inquiries

No phone calls regarding this BID will be accepted. If you have any questions, please send an email to David Cedrone at dcedrone@dhe.mass.edu specify alternate ID # **FY2019 TRAIN** in the subject line. Questions must be submitted by 12:00 Noon EST August 31, 2018 and will be posted on or around September 7, 2018 by 4:00 PM EST. Questions and responses will be posted to the COMMBUYS website: www.COMMBUYS.com, in same location as this BID (Open Market Bid BD-19-1088-RGT01-RGT01-29743).

X. Awards

Massachusetts’ FY19 state budget provides that funds shall be expended for the training resources and internship networks (TRAIN) grant program established under section 179 of chapter 46 of the acts of 2015; provided further, that not less than \$1,500,000 shall be expended for monthly stipends and other support services for participants in order to facilitate participation in said program; provided further, that not more than \$100,000 shall be expended for administrative costs for said program; provided further, that the department shall seek additional proposals to expand the TRAIN program to additional community colleges in fiscal year 2019.

The Training Resources and Internship Networks Program (TRAIN) grant program will support two funding ranges for individual projects, the first between \$75,000 - \$125,000 and the second between \$125,000 and \$250,000 reflecting the program design, number of people served and planned outcomes. The final award amounts will be based upon the

scope and merits of each proposal. From eight to twelve proposals are anticipated to be awarded.

Grants will be awarded in FY19. All expenses must be incurred no later than June 30, 2019.

XI. Policies

Grant Disbursement

Following the applicant's acceptance of the award letter, and the execution of the Interagency Service Agreement the applicant can expect to receive an initial disbursement for start-up costs and then subsequent payments will be based on project deliverables (e.g. interim report or other milestones). A final payment will be made upon project completion and submission of a final spending report.

Publicity

Grant recipients are obligated to acknowledge the funding source in all print materials, websites and press releases.

Solicitor Responsibility

Solicitors may not alter (manually or electronically) the grant application language or any grant application component files. Modifications to the body of the grant application, specifications, terms and conditions, or application which change the intent of this grant application are prohibited and may disqualify a response.

All costs associated with responding to this RFP are the sole responsibility of the responding organization. The DHE reserves the right to use any and all ideas included in any response without incurring any obligations to the responding firm or committing to awards for the proposed services. Responses are considered public information.

Performance

Any funds distributed to successful applicants are done so with the expectation that the awardee will deliver the programs as described and serve the numbers of participants detailed in the application. If the applicant is for some reason unable to fulfill the program described in the original proposal, we reserve the right to recover funds distributed.

Legal Disclaimer

This RFP does not represent a contractual agreement by the DHE to any applying organization. Selected organizations will enter into an Interagency Service Agreement with the DHE upon award.

THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL RESPONSES AND THE RIGHT TO CANCEL THIS REQUEST FOR QUALIFIED PROPOSALS (RFP) AT ANY TIME PRIOR TO AWARD.

XII. Proposed Budget

Please complete the attached budget template a breakdown of the requested funding from the TRAIN grant program. Upon completion of the table, please provide an additional *Budget Narrative* that includes specific details of each budget item in the table.