

Workforce Issuance

## 100 DCS XX.XXX 🗹 Policy 🞎 Information

**To**: Chief Elected Officials

MassHire Workforce Board Chairs

MassHire Workforce Board Directors

MassHire Career Center Directors

MassHire Fiscal Officers

MDCS Operations Managers

**cc:** WIOA State Partners

**From:** Diane Hurley, Acting Director

 MassHire Department of Career Services

 Christine Abrams, President/CEO

 Commonwealth Corporation

**Date:** **April XX, 2023**

**Subject:** **FutureSkills Career Technical Initiative (CTI) Participant Eligibility, Documentation, Referrals and Co-Enrollment**

 **REVIEW AND COMMENT – COMMENTS DUE BY COB ON APRIL 28, 2023**

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**Purpose:** To provide MassHire Workforce Boards, MassHire Career Center Operators and other local workforce partners with guidance regarding Jobseeker eligibility and documentation for FutureSkills CTI Programs.

**Background:** Through the “FutureSkills” (Upskilling) Program, the Workforce Skills Cabinet (WSC) invested American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds to expand the scale of “upskilling” pathways across education, training, and workforce providers in partnership with employers that prepare unemployed and underemployed individuals with the training and skills needed to meet business demand. Commonwealth Corporation, on behalf of the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development and the WSC, will administer ARP funded training programs also known as FutureSkills training programs (statewide initiative). FutureSkills will support placement in a variety of training programs including the Career Technical Initiative (CTI), Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund (WCTF), Replenishing Employer Investment in Education and Workforce Training (RENEW), and new initiative grants.

MassHire Career Centers (MCCs) provide seamless delivery of multiple universally accessible services to job seekers that are customer-centered. Eligible job seekers have access to services that lead to pathways for economic sufficiency. Job seekers receive access to services based on needs identified during intake and initial assessment.

Dedicated career center staff will support the jobseeker re-employment journey through FutureSkills training programs.

**Policy:** All Cohorts funded for CTI Round 7 and forward, including previously awarded cohorts with a training program start date on or after March 1, 2023, will utilize the eligibility guidelines below related to CTI programming.

FutureSkills is a statewide initiative and there are no geographical restrictions on accessing training. Customers may seek available training outside of their service delivery area if commuting does not interfere with the successful completion of training.

**Target Population (Income Guidelines)**

Grant funds must be used to train Massachusetts residents who are unemployed or underemployed. Unemployed individuals are a priority target population and programs are designed to support the needs of this population.

1. An unemployed individual is defined as an individual who is not currently employed at the time of enrollment in the program.
2. An underemployed individual is defined as an individual who is earning less than 60% of the Median Household Income (also referred to as Area Median Income) for the Workforce Area in which they reside. The following chart provides the median income level for each Workforce Area. MCCs are encouraged to use either the MHI or the hourly wage that is most advantageous to the training applicant.

|  |
| --- |
| **60% of USDA/SAIPE County Median Household Income 2021** |
| **Workforce Area**  | **60% MHI**  | **Hourly Wage**  |
| **Berkshire**  | $36,600 | $17.60 |
| **Boston**  | $46,300 | $22.30 |
| **Bristol**  | $43,700 | $21.00 |
| **Cape and Islands**  | $49,800 | $23.90 |
| **Central Region**  | $50,700 | $24.40 |
| **Franklin Hampshire**  | $46,300 | $22.20 |
| **Greater Brockton**  | $59,700 | $28.70 |
| **Greater Lowell**  | $67,400 | $32.40 |
| **Greater New Bedford**  | $43,700 | $21.00 |
| **Hampden County**  | $37,100 | $17.80 |
| **Merrimack Valley**  | $52,300 | $25.10 |
| **Metro North**  | $67,400 | $32.40 |
| **Metro South/West**  | $67,400 | $32.40 |
| **North Central**  | $50,700 | $24.40 |
| **North Shore**  | $52,300 | $25.10 |
| **South Shore**  | $68,800 | $33.10 |

Source: US Dept of Agriculture Economic Research Service (usda.gov), based on Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) program of the U.S. Census Bureau. Not broken out by size of family/household. Underemployed individuals should use their individual income for eligibility, not that of their household. MA 2020 Median Income (MHI) - published Dec. 2021. Based on 60% MHI for county with the most workers in the region.

The USDA/SAIPE is an estimate that is updated annually in and around December, reporting on the prior year. Commonwealth Corporation will release the USDA/SAIPE estimate annually to grantees for implementation for any cohorts with a start date of February 1st – January 31st.

**Participant Documentation**

MassHire Career Centers are required to collect eligibility documentation described in this issuance. Documentation is as follows:

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| --- | --- |
| Commonwealth Corporation Participant Registration Form (Attachment A) | This can be used for self-attestation in lieu of documents the participants may not have readily available. Completed copy to be sent to training provider.  |
| Staff Attestation for FutureSkills Referral Form (Attachment B) | For MCC Staff to complete and send to training providers to attest to program eligibility.  |
| \*Customer Release of Information for Referrals to FutureSkills Training Programs (Attachment C) | For MCC Staff to complete and send to the training provider so information can be shared with disclosure to and with agreement of participant.  |

MassHire Career Centers are responsible to follow[Issuance 100 DCS 37.102 FutureSkills MOSES Data Entry for MassHire Job Seekers](https://www.mass.gov/service-details/massworkforce-american-rescue-plan-act-arpa-policy-issuances) to document the journey of the job seeker participant (from enrollment, case management and 60-day employment retention follow up). Customer Release of Information Form for Referrals to FutureSkills Training Programs (Attachment C) is required before information is shared with training provider.

**Massachusetts Residency Requirement**

Only Massachusetts residents are eligible for FutureSkills programming. Massachusetts residency may be documented using any the documents listed below:

* utility bill dated within the last three months
* current and valid state-issued ID
* government mail received in the past 60 days (including property tax or excise tax bill)
* Firearm ID card
* bank statement
* pension statement
* auto or home insurance policy

**Determining Unemployment**

Examples of forms of documentation that can be accepted for proof of unemployment include:

* Proof of UI receipt
* Letter of unemployment verification
* Screenshot of photo of UI account
* Tax form for proof of no income (e.g., 1040 form)

**Determining Underemployment**

If a participant is currently employed, follow the steps below to determine underemployment status.

* Establish the individual’s annual income and/or hourly wage by obtaining one or more of the types of documentation listed below.
* Establish Workforce Area of residence (using the table above).

**Types of Underemployment Documentation**

The following describes the documentation that can be accepted as proof of underemployment and must be kept on file.

**Pay Stubs**

A minimum of 1 pay stub dated within the past six months can be used to determine income.

**Direct Deposits**

Proof of bank records for direct deposit payments can be accepted as proof of underemployment.

**Tax Forms**

Tax form that indicates the participant’s income over the past year can serve as proof of income. A 1040 or a 1099 is acceptable if the individual is self-employed.

**Offer Letter/Employer Letter**

Offer letter from employer that details pay rate/annual salary can be accepted as proof of income. Alternatively, any letter from a current employer that details their salary/wage would be acceptable.

**Proof of Public Benefits**

Recipients of income-based public benefits are automatically eligible for CTI programs. Proof of receipt of these benefits may include letters, deposits or EBT cards. List of public benefits includes, but is not limited to:

* TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) benefits
* SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits
* SSI (Supplemental Security Income)
* SSDI (Social Security Disability Insurance)

**WIOA Co-Enrollment**

MCCs should follow their local processes to determine whether a job seeker meets WIOA eligibility for co-enrollment, but this should not delay the FutureSkills enrollment process. The process may include a review of the jobseeker’s training justification that is linked to employment opportunities in the local area, region, or in another area in which the jobseeker is willing to commute or relocate.

Participants may benefit from co-enrollment into other programs they may be eligible for. These programs may include but are not limited to WIOA, Trade, WPP, etc. Please note, Veterans and eligible spouses continue to receive priority of service for all federal and state-funded job-training programs, which may include FutureSkills programming.

MassHire strongly encourages co-enrollment into any program that jobseekers may be eligible for to ensure coordinated services and support successful outcomes.

Co-enrollment may require additional documentation and MassHire Career Centers must follow the policies that oversee those programs for collection of those documents. MCCs should ensure that partner grantees are aware and integrate this language into the MOA,as appropriate.

**Program-Specific Entry Requirements**

In addition to FutureSkills eligibility criteria, which is standard across all programs, each school may have additional eligibility criteria required or suggested for entry into the program. CTI Programs are encouraged to limit these additional program-specific eligibility criteria to those that are required for employment.

CTI-approved schools should consider the following questions and share this information with the MassHire Career Center (Upskilling Navigator) to ensure successful recruitment and screening. Some of these questions may not result in firm selection criteria but may be important for the job seeker to understand so they can assess the best fit for employment and work with their Upskilling Navigator to develop a plan during the program.

* Is a High School Diploma or GED required to secure employment?
* Do any employer partners require COVID vaccination prior to employment?
* Do employer partners conduct a background check as part of their application process? If so, what are the CORI restrictions for employment?
* Do employer partners require employees to have access to reliable transportation? Is there any flexibility provided to this requirement?

**Action Required:**  Please ensure all appropriate management and staff are familiar with and have a full understanding of the requirements within this policy.

**Effective:**  Immediately

**Inquiries:**  Email all inquiries related to this policy to PolicyQ&A@mass.gov.

**Attachments:** A - Commonwealth Corporation Participant Registration Form

B - Staff Attestation for FutureSkills Referral Form

C - Customer Release of Information Form for Referrals to FutureSkills Training Programs