



DEPARTMENT OF
CAREER SERVICES

Workforce Issuance

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☒ **Policy** ☐ **Information**

To: 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

Date: January 28, 2025

Subject: **Rapid Response Set-Aside Funding**

Purpose: To provide guidance to MassHire Workforce Boards (MWB), MassHire Career Center Operators and other local workforce partners regarding the Commonwealth's policy related to the local Rapid Response Set-Aside Funding application and review process under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA).

Background: Rapid Response Set-Aside (RRSA) funds represent a portion of the Commonwealth's allotment of WIOA Dislocated Worker funds that are reserved at the state level (WIOA Sec. 133(a)(2)).

RRSA funds are specifically held aside for layoff or plant closing events:

- § Of insufficient size to meet application requirements for a National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG); or
- § For which a high number of Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)-related layoffs require additional funds to support staffing needs; or
- § For which RRSA funds are needed as a "bridge" while awaiting the award of a requested NDWG, whether the NDWG is a new application or a modification request for additional funds.

NOTE: When RRSA funds are requested for an event that meets the criteria for an NDWG application, the local board must simultaneously work with MDCS to develop the NDWG application.

This policy issuance provides guidance on the process and forms for the RRSA grant application and the utilization of RRSA funds, including a description of two new categories of potential use of these funds – (1) vouchering for NDWG bridge funding and (2) administration, and also provides instruction with regard to participant enrollment requirements.

Policy: 1. Rapid Response Set-Aside (RRSA) Request for Funding

- a. Massachusetts RRSA funds may be requested by a WDB when the level of local layoff and/or plant closing activity is such that current resources are insufficient to meet the needs of the affected workers.
- b. MassHire Workforce Boards requesting RRSA funding will adhere to the Commonwealth's application and review policy and procedures as delineated herein and in Attachments A, B, C and D.

2. Utilization of RRSA Funds: applications for RRSA funds are limited to the following:

- a. Career Services: to provide person-centered re-employment services to workers who have been or will be adversely affected by an announced layoff or plant closing event.

The program of services may include, but is not limited to such re-employment activities as:

1. in-depth assessment and career counseling;
2. job search-related workshops;
3. occupational skill training;
4. basic skills training, in conjunction with occupational skills training; and
5. supportive services

RRSA funds used for this purpose may be used to contract specific services (such as Individual Training Accounts (ITA) or supportive services) to qualified third-party providers or to cover the cost of added staffing when current staffing resources are insufficient to meet local needs.

- b. Feasibility Study: to conduct a study to determine the feasibility of either a full or partial buyout of the company by members of the workforce as part of an overall layoff aversion strategy.

To support a feasibility study, RRSA funds may be used to:

- 1. Identify the size and potential of the market that must be captured,
- 2. Determine management structure and skills that need to be obtained by the new company,
- 3. Determine the structure of a potential financing package, and
- 4. Develop and submit preliminary financial projections for the new company.

- c. Vouchering (NDWG Bridge Funding Only): in cases where RRSA funds are being requested for NDWG “bridge funding,” it may be determined that there are eligible workers who may want to access services at a career center that is located in a different workforce area. The RRSA operator may elect to include NDWG “vouchering” payments to other career centers and ITA payments for customers of those career centers within its application. The local operator would be subject to terms, conditions and process established in the NDWG Master Agreement. The vouchering payment for career services provided to RRSA enrollees is limited to \$1,500 per participant.

Note: vouchering payments, as with all RRSA expenditures, are subject to recapture by MDCS upon NDWG award. Please refer to Attachment D: RRSA Vouchering Payment Instructions.

- d. Administration: local areas may request up to 5% of the total budget for costs related to administration. Please refer to WIOA §181 for the administrative costs definition.

3. Participant Enrollment

- a. All individuals served with RRSA funds must be enrolled in MOSES, including customers served at other career centers through the vouchering program. A Career Center-specific program will be set up in MOSES for this purpose.
- b. All RRSA customers must be co-enrolled in the Dislocated Worker program.

Action

Required: Please assure that all relevant local policies and procedures are consistent with the requirements described in this policy issuance.

Effective: Immediately

Inquiries: Please email all questions to PolicyQA@mass.gov; indicate Policy number and description.

Attachments: A: Grant Application Process
B: Grant Application
C: Fiscal Application
D: Vouchering Payment Guidance
E: Vouchering Master Agreement Template
F: Statement of Application Completeness Checklist