**Employment Program for Young Adults with Disabilities**

**FY’19 Appropriation**

**Questions & Answers**

**Updated 12/7/18-New Questions/Answers in Red**

**Eligible Lead Applicants**

Q: What defines a community organization in this RFP?

A: The term ‘‘community-based organization’’ means a private nonprofit organization (which may include a faith-based organization), that is representative of a community or a significant segment of a community and that has demonstrated expertise and effectiveness in addressing the employment, training, or education needs of individuals with barriers to employment.

Q: The organization that will most likely provide fiscal sponsorship, although involved with people with disabilities, does not have experience delivering employment focused programming. However, the staff who would be providing services do have this previous experience. Would we be eligible?

A: We are seeking applications from community based organizations with demonstrated success and expertise in preparing young adults with disabilities for employment. Based on this intent it would be up to the applicant to demonstrate that the lead applicant had this experience.

**Partners**

Q: On page 3 it states: “*Applicants must provide training and placement services that prepare individuals to meet a regional business’ skill and work readiness requirements for in demand occupation(s).  Applicants should identify a specific occupation to be targeted and propose a training program that prepares individuals for that specific occupation.”* Is there a definition of "regional business?" What is meant by "in demand occupations?"

A: A regional business is a business local to the target region that employ Massachusetts residents in the target occupations. Business partners must demonstrate that they have sufficient demand to hire individuals who complete the program, as detailed in the chart in Attachment 1, question 2D.

Q: On page 2, it says that we must have two “business” partners – are there limitations to the business aspect of our partners? Can they be nonprofit organizations that meet all other partnership requirements, for example?

A: The partnership must at a minimum include two businesses with operations in Massachusetts that employ Massachusetts residents in the target occupation(s). The legal structure of the business is not a criteria.

**Target Population**

Q: On page 3 it says that the target population is 18-35. I just want to confirm that this is not a typo, as typically “youth” is defined more in the range of 18-24. Since it is for “young adults” it is probably correct but I just wanted to make sure.

A: Yes, the age range provided in the RFP is correct.

Q: Can individuals be enrolled in a school-based transition program?

A: No, that would not be an eligible population for this grant program.

Q: How are referrals made; is there a required from?

A: Applicants and their partners are responsible for determining this process and describing the referral recruitment plan in the application.

Q: What are the sources of referrals?

A: Applicants must describe their outreach and recruitment strategy in their application including what the name of community partners/state agencies from which they will receive referrals.

Q: What documentation of a disability is required?

A: Programs serving individuals with disabilities must collect one of the following forms of documentation to document that the individual has met the individuals with disabilities eligibility criteria:

1. Letter from Substance Use Disorder Program

2. Letter from Child Study Team Stating Specific Eligibility

3. Medical Records

4. Observable Condition

5. Physician Statement

6. Psychiatrist’s/Psychologist’s Diagnosis

7. Rehabilitation Evaluation

8. School Records

9. Social Service Records\Referral

10. Social Security Administration Disability Program (SSI/SSDI) or Veterans Admin. Records

11. Statement from a Vocational Rehabilitation Agency or a community partner/provider

12. Workers Compensation Record

13. Applicant Self-Disclosure Statement if no other forms of documentation are available – must be supported with a corroborative contact or reliable witness

14. Telephone verification if other forms of documentation are not readily available

15. Document inspection if provided document cannot be legally photocopied

Q: Are there any restrictions as to the type(s) of disabilities

A: No

Q: Who determines eligibility for this program?

A: The lead applicant or other identified partner determines eligibility based on the eligibility guidelines provided by Commonwealth Corporation.

Q: Can participants have a history of receiving or currently be receiving services from a state agency such as DDS or MRC?

A: An individual’s receipt of prior or current services will not prohibit them from participating in grant services through the Employment Program for Young Adults with Disabilities. However, applicants are expected to ensure through their referral and selection process that the enrolled individuals are a good fit for the proposed program and that they are likely to benefit from the program as part of the services they are currently receiving and that this will lead to employment.

Q: Would our residents, with confirmed Substance Use Disorders, qualify as a diagnosed disability for your program?

A: Yes

**Outcomes/Program Design**

Q: Is there a target number of participants?

A: Commonwealth Corporation has not established a cost per participant. However, applicants will be evaluated on the reasonableness of their budget and that their proposed enrollments and outcomes are appropriate given the expenses of the program.

Q: Is there an expectation as to the number of participants selected for the cohort to be trained and employed. Also, when employed, is there an expectation for the number of hours worked per week (e.g., at least 20?)

A: Commonwealth Corporation has established a projected placement rate of 70% of enrollees based on findings from the benchmarking report, “Apples to Apples: Making Data Work for Community-Based Workforce Development Programs” published by the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce (<http://benchmarking.skilledwork.org/?p=1176>) and Commonwealth Corporation’s experience. Applicants may propose a different placement rate along with an explanation. This explanation should cite specific performance rates documented for a similar program design serving a similar population. We have not established a minimum number of hours worked per week. However, applicants that expect their target population to work less than full-time (less than 35 hours per week) should identify that in their application and describe why that is the appropriate strategy for the target population.  Applicants should also specify whether post-placement supports would include any coaching and support to increase hours worked over a period of time after initial placement.

Q: Does the job placement mentioned in the application include internships?

A: An internship would not be considered a job placement.

Q: While interns learn technical skills at most sites, our program and staff focus on building soft-skills. Would this work for the proposal's program training expectations?

A: Applicants must demonstrate that the combined program services, which may include a combination of classroom based and experienced based skill building, would prepare the individual for employment in the target occupation.

**Target Occupation**

Q: Also on page 3, under target occupations, it says that you may train people for multiple occupations “if the required skills and credentials are identical and can be attained through participation in the same training program.” Is it possible for the main training program be for one topic, say soft skills, but participants also complete occupation-specific training required by two different industries?

A: The intention is that the training program include both a mix of soft skills and occupation-specific training and that the training program lead to placement. So since in your example the occupational skills and credentials are not identical between both occupations and an individual couldn’t participate in a single training program (soft skills and occupational skills) to obtain both jobs then it would not fit the spirit of this allowance to train individuals for multiple sectors “if the required skills and credentials are identical and can be attaining trough participation in the same training program.”

**Other**

Q: We are applying for a DOR COGS. If we qualify to be an applicant, what happens if the COGS is not available by 12/11? Does that disqualify our application?

A: If you have not received your DOR COGS by the application deadline, please submit proof of application. Applicants will need to submit COGS prior to any grant awards being made to the applicant organizations, if awarded funding.

Q: This RFP is for FY ’19.  Is there an annualization of the service in order to continue or is there another possibility for continuity of the program?

A: This solicitation is funded out of a General Appropriation Act in the Fiscal Year 2019 State Budget. Funds must be spent by June 30, 2019. At this time there are no funds available for this program beyond this appropriation.