

DIGITAL INNOVATION & LIFELONG LEARNING

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS FOR DIGITALLY ENHANCED,
COMPETENCY-BASED TRAINING FOR INCUMBENT HEALTH CARE WORKERS

- ▶ Released: June 12, 2019
- ▶ Letter of Intent Due: July 12, 2019
- ▶ Final Proposals Due: October 18, 2019

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"It's possible to create a way for folks to learn that simply hasn't been available historically to people. And depending on how you learn, and the speed with which you learn, and the language that works for you and the approach that works for you, the possibilities here, folks, get pretty big. As long as people are willing to think differently about how this all fits together, the opportunities again are enormous."

- Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker



PART I: OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION

CARLA'S STORY: WHY MASSACHUSETTS NEEDS AN ECOSYSTEM OF LIFELONG LEARNING

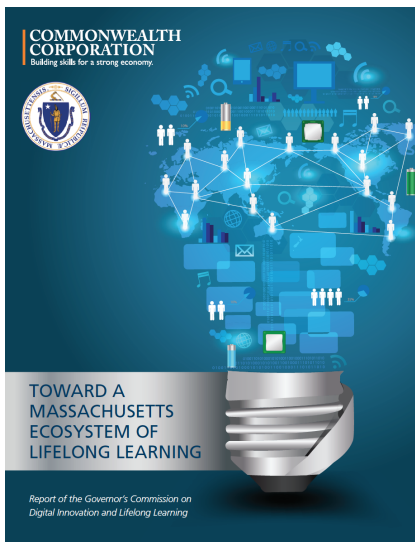
For the past seven years, Carla has been an entry-level health care worker. A single mother with a high school diploma who immigrated to the United States eight years ago, her wages are now \$14 an hour, making it a struggle for her to support her family even when she works more than 40 hours a week. Despite these challenges, Carla has consistently demonstrated passion for her work, earning praise from both her patients and employer, who cite her caring approach, diligence, and interest in continuing to improve her practice. Carla would like to advance professionally, but she can't figure out how to participate in the required training. She needs to continue to work as the sole caretaker of her two youngest children and she shares her car with her 19-year-old daughter, who attends a community college and works evenings. Carla's circumstances make returning to the classroom an unrealistic – and unaffordable – option.

With the rising demand for community-based care, Carla's employer also faces growing challenges filling open positions. The company wishes to build a career advancement ladder to develop the skills of staff like Carla and other promising colleagues, but it lacks the knowledge and capacity to provide in-house training. And low margins for reimbursable time make it nearly impossible to schedule sufficient training time during the work day.

Carla and her employer's experiences are not unique. Across Massachusetts, thousands of health care employees in entry- and mid-level health care occupations including home health aides, certified nursing assistants, and direct care workers lack sufficient access to education and skill-building opportunities, while employers in these industries face overwhelming worker shortages.

And so, despite multiple studies and interventions over the past decade, the health care labor shortage in Massachusetts persists. Economists now predict a gap of 43,000 positions by 2024. The challenge of building career ladders in part reflects the significant differences in educational attainment across racial groups: The majority of the state's health care workforce come from demographic groups whose college completion rates trail that of whites. In 2017, the US Census estimated that 31% of whites in Massachusetts would have a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 25% of Blacks and 18% of Latinos. (Source: US Census, *Educational Attainment, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates* - factfinder.census.gov)

The issue is not the lack of traditional educational opportunities for entry-level health care workers, but about the feasibility of participating in these offerings. Traditional classroom-based college programs, with their high tuition and emphasis on "seat time," are almost never a feasible option for workers like Carla. They are too expensive, difficult to reach, and frequently scheduled during times that are not convenient for working adults, especially those with after-hours family obligations.



Overcoming this challenge by capitalizing on new opportunities afforded by digital innovation was the impetus for the creation of Governor Charlie Baker's Commission on Digital Innovation and Lifelong Learning. Through its recent culminating report, "***Toward a Massachusetts Ecosystem of Lifelong Learning***," (tinyurl.com/DILLCommissionReport) the Commission has issued an overarching call to action for Massachusetts to create an "ecosystem of lifelong learning" that will dramatically increase access to education and skill-building opportunities for a largely untapped market of employed learners like Carla and those who seek employment. The ecosystem will also more closely align the Commonwealth's postsecondary education and training strategies with three key industry sectors facing significant worker shortages that are crucial to our state's future: Health Care, Information Technology, and Advanced Manufacturing.

In recommending that online and competency-based learning be paired and elevated as a strategy for worker training, the Commission on Digital Innovation and Lifelong Learning cited their proven benefits:

- State and national research and experience have demonstrated that digital programming that focuses on competency-based approaches, which allows learners to proceed at a personalized pace, and includes appropriate support from onboarding through course completion, is an effective and affordable strategy for working adults.
- It is especially relevant for those who, like Carla, lack the resources, time, and accessibility to participate in traditional face-to-face courses.
- For employers, this approach to worker training, which is modeled on several successful learning and training initiatives, can advance workers' skills and improve retention and career prospects.

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- For training providers, especially higher education institutions, establishing new competency-based digital programs has the potential to enhance their capacity to bridge the skills gap in health care and to gain expertise to provide employer enhanced digital learning in other growing fields.

Ultimately, our goal for this pilot process is to build systems that generate worker and business outcomes – by building incumbent pathways at the employer level that promote workers and build a diverse workforce.

ABOUT OUR PILOTS

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts now seeks pioneering healthcare employers, colleges, universities, training providers, and members of the workforce development community to begin launching this “ecosystem” by participating in new Digital Innovation and Lifelong Learning (DILL) Pilots.

Our goal is to leverage digital learning to upskill employees like Carla in order to increase her economic opportunity while addressing the critical workforce shortage in health care.

With the support of the Strada Education Network and the Senator Kenneth J. Donnelly Workforce Success Grants funded through the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund, an initiative of the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, **three partnerships, each of which includes employers and higher education institutions/training organizations, will each receive up to \$200,000 through 2-year grants to develop and subsequently implement new digital or hybrid competency-based programs for entry-level incumbent health care workers**, where data from the [Commonwealth’s Regional Skills Blueprint \(mass.gov/service-details/view-your-regions-blueprint\)](https://mass.gov/service-details/view-your-regions-blueprint) indicate large skills gaps for further advancement and economic mobility amidst strong future job growth.

This training will help workers gain skills in order to launch a career pathway that will lead to promotions and wage gains. Depending on the target occupation, these programs may lead to a micro-credential of relevance in the field or stackable certification toward an associate’s or bachelor’s degree.

Partnerships will first participate together in a six-month Program Design phase led by Commonwealth Corporation and e-learning experts in order to develop their curricula, build effective coaching and supports, and create a strategic plan for the establishment of this new program. During the subsequent 18-month Implementation Phase, a first cohort of students from each employer will be recruited, vetted, and prepared to become successful digital learning students while continuing to work. They will then enroll as pilot members in the new programs offered by the higher education institution and/or training provider. The employer and training provider will provide support for their persistence throughout their participation. Pilot funds will help to underwrite the costs of developing these programs and subsidize tuition and student support.

Each partnership will provide a 30% cash or in-kind match.

OUR RESEARCH AGENDA AND FUTURE PLANS

Our pilot partnerships will have an exciting opportunity to play leadership roles as early contributors to Massachusetts' ecosystem of lifelong learning.

As members of an intentionally organized learning community, the "pioneer pilots" will inform each other's designs, assess and strengthen their students' experience, and provide ongoing guidance and feedback to the Commonwealth Corporation and digital learning community about how best to support the growth of effective, digitally enhanced, competency-based learning as a promising strategy for workforce development.

Over the next few years, Commonwealth Corporation plans to enlarge this ecosystem by:

- Raising additional public and philanthropic dollars to significantly expand the number of digital learning pilots for workforce needs outlined in the state's regional blueprints and in the recent recommendations of the Governor's Health Care Collaborative.
- Promoting policy shifts, especially to expand financial aid for non-credentialed programming.
- Conducting and disseminating field-building research.

OUR OUTCOMES AND SUCCESS MEASURES

In establishing these pilots, we seek to:

- 1) Address the shortage of health care workers by developing, implementing, and piloting the delivery of digitally enabled, competency-based training and degree programs for diverse health care workers that can build skills and lead to wage gains and career advancement.
- 2) Increase participants' economic mobility and opportunities for career advancement.

Recognizing that the required amount of study for advancement in the target occupation may influence whether an employee is ready to move directly into a new occupation after completing this 6-12 month program, at very least the program design should enable employees to make significant progress toward that goal.

To assess success, we will measure benefits to employers and participant employees, including:

- % of students who complete the program and earn a relevant credential
- # of students who are promoted as a result of their participation in the program
- % of students who achieve a wage gain
- % retention increases among participants at their current employer
- % increases in employers' fill rate for relevant professions

Additionally, we seek to enhance the capacity of higher education organizations, training providers, and employers at varying levels of digital maturation to co-create new digitally based programming for incumbent workers in growing fields by codifying the conditions needed to build that capacity.

ABOUT COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION AND INTEGRATED WRAPAROUND SUPPORT MODELS

Competency-based education (CBE) is a 40-year-old educational model that has experienced recent resurgence.

It uses learning, not time, as the metric of student success. This student-centered, accelerated approach redefines traditional credit-based requirements in learning and instead stresses competencies derived from the skills proven to be the most relevant by educators and employers in real life settings.



Different from traditional seat-time based learning, learners typically work on one competency at a time that is directly connected to a skill or practice they must attain for their target occupation. Students receive personalized support and are evaluated on mastery of that competency before they can move on. Through a rigorous assessment process, students may also skip learning modules entirely if they are able to demonstrate mastery. (*Adapted from Competency Based Education; CompetencyWorks; and The EvolLLLution*)

A growing body of research and experience points to the critical role of designing learning models that integrate online learning tools with “wrap around” supports (e.g. learning coaches, case management to troubleshoot life challenges, with online learning models to promote the success of employees. Entry-level workers like Carla need to participate in learning and training models that address more than learning content in order to succeed while continuing to work, raise her family, and meet their other obligations on a limited paycheck. She and other students like her will need a comprehensive integrated system of supports that includes:

- Preliminary orientation about how to become a successful online learner – from both the technical and time management standpoint – and balance the role of student and worker.
- Access to academic coaching to complete assignments. This may be especially relevant to students who speak English as a second language.
- “Nudges” to ensure continued progress.
- Coaching to support persistence in the face of personal and professional challenges to their success as students and to provide further career and financial planning guidance.
- Support and coordination from their employers that may include onsite coaching, release time, and access to services like ESOL training.



PART II: PILOT REQUIREMENTS

BENEFICIARIES

This pilot is meant to directly benefit diverse entry-level incumbent health care workers who could be candidates for high-demand, higher wage occupations if they had the appropriate skills and competencies. We envision that most of the beneficiaries will not yet have earned a college degree, though this is not a requirement. New programs may be designed to assist these workers to move up the career ladder in their existing occupations or prepare them to “cross” occupations into more advanced higher paying roles in other healthcare fields.

For the pilots, partnerships will need to recruit these participants from their health care employer partners.

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

Each pilot will create new or adapted competency-based education and skills training that will be offered to students primarily through online platforms. Depending on their content, these courses may lead to a micro-credential required for advancement, or stackable credentials (academic credits) that can be applied towards an associate’s or bachelor’s degree.

- **Duration:** Students should have access to the structure and support that will allow them to complete the program in 6-12 months, or 18 months maximum for more lengthy or complex subjects.
- **Assessment and Credit for Prior Skills:** As competency-based learners, students will have the opportunity to demonstrate and earn credit for the skills that they already possess, and then learn, practice, and demonstrate new skills that are relevant for the workplace.
- **Relevance:** Competencies that students achieve must have broadly recognized value among other employers in similar

occupations, rather than being limited to the practices of the pilot group of employers.

- **Wraparound Support:** As outlined in the section “About Competency-Based Education and Wraparound Support,” the training provider, employer and workforce partners will need to collaborate to support participants’ preparation, progress and completion of the program.
- **Pell Benchmarked:** Because affordability will likely be a critical factor for scaling these programs, program tuitions should be roughly benchmarked to federal Pell Grant levels, which are presently approximately \$6,100 per year or \$3,500 per semester.
- **Hybrid as needed:** Some programs may also need to include “hands-on” clinical instruction and/or assessments. We will explore how to incorporate these during the Program Design process.

PARTNERSHIP PARTICIPANTS AND ROLES

Our partnership formation strategy might be called a “stone soup model.” We encourage the formation of partnerships that collectively possess the qualifications, commitments, and expertise to design the program.

Each partner must commit to fully engaging in program planning and development in order to design, implement, and assess these pilots and will be asked to identify their anticipated role during the final application stage through a signed Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that each partnership will submit.

We welcome partnerships that collectively possess varying levels of digital and competency-based design and instructional expertise. This will enable our pilots to serve as laboratories that mirror Massachusetts’ current ecosystem of employers and training providers and provide valuable data for the future efforts to others, especially those who are just getting started.

The following types of organizations are eligible to participate in a partnership and apply as lead applicants on behalf of a partnership:

- Higher education institutions
- Nonprofit education, training or other service providers
- E-learning/training organizations
- Employers with operations in Massachusetts or that employ Massachusetts residents in the proposed target occupation
- MassHire workforce boards
- MassHire career centers
- Community-based organizations, including adult basic education and ESOL providers
- Employer associations
- Labor organizations
- Vocational education institutions

Because competency-based education relies on the close collaboration of employers and education institutions to ensure that the learning content is responsive to the needs of the target occupation, **all partnerships must include:**



1) **At least two Massachusetts employers** who have vacancies/hiring needs in the target occupation and agree to use the new education program as a staff advancement and/or sourcing strategy (e.g. a way to build a robust internal pipeline). These employers must demonstrate:

- Commitment to building a learning “model” within the company that includes training (competency-based, online education) with embedded worker supports necessary to complete education and be promoted within.
- Commitment to using this learning model (described above) to create internal promotional pathways for entry-level workers and to increase diversity in mid- to high skilled jobs in the company.
- Familiarity with technical, soft skills, and work readiness requirements for employment in the target occupation that will be translated into competency-based course work.
- Commitment to investing sufficient time during the Program Design phase to work with higher education/training and other partners to design a new lifelong learning model that will prepare entry-level workers for successful advancement into the target occupation.
- Commitment to developing and conducting a robust employee/student recruitment, screening, and support strategy.



2) **A higher education institution or learning/training provider** that is committed to developing a digitally enabled, competency-based training program in collaboration with the employers and other pilot partners to prepare current health care workers for advancement into the target occupation. As a baseline, this organization must:

- Have experience delivering digital courses and have an online platform for digital instruction.
- Employ staff or consultants with teaching expertise appropriately related to the training needs of the proposed occupation (to lead the course design).
- Offer robust student supports for working adults who have minimal or no college experience as part of online course offerings, or the ability to connect existing supports to new online programming. These supports must be adaptable for entry level workers who will be online learners as part of pilots.

Required Lead Applicant

From among the partners, each partnership will need to select a lead applicant who:

- Can convene partnering organizations in order to achieve the overall project goals. This may include coordinating the design of the project, developing budgets, negotiating agreement of the project performance management measures, and coordinating the implementation and assessment.

-
- Has experience with grant management and the operational capacity to manage public funds.
 - Is committed to working collaboratively with Commonwealth Corporation to ensure that the program is designed to meet participants' needs and to support continued communication- and solution-focused analysis of the pilots' strengths and areas of improvement to ensure the program's efficacy during and after the pilots.

NOTE: Organizations seeking partners can visit this "[Interested in Partnering Signup](https://tinyurl.com/DILLPartners)" spreadsheet (<https://tinyurl.com/DILLPartners>) to identify themselves and locate other prospective partners.

CO-DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION: A TWO-STAGE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS



Phase 1: Program Design (January 2020 – June 2020)

The goals of this phase are to develop a robust learning model for entry-level workers at the employer(s). In Phase I, partners will work to 1) enable partnerships to develop new digitally enabled, competency-based courses for incumbent health care workers that reflect the competencies of the target health care occupation; 2) create or refine systems for student recruitment, vetting and onboarding; 3) develop or enhance wraparound student support capacity 4) develop or deepen partners' knowledge and capacity to successfully offer digitally enabled, competency-based programming in the future.

The process will be facilitated by Commonwealth Corporation and a team of experts in digital and competency-based course design and student support through monthly meetings with the members of the pilots, who will serve as a learning community, and through follow-up phone calls to Program Design team members of each Partnership.

Design Teams: At minimum, the required participants from each partnership should include:

1. Representative from the lead agency who is managing the project.
2. Employer representative who can identify the core competencies and develop assessment and training processes.
3. From the training or higher education organization: lead content expert (course instructor) and the lead digital instruction designer (if available).

Products: By the end of the Program Design Phase each collaborative will have:

1. Created a course plan including relevant or associated competencies; plan for their assessment; and preliminary online lesson plans.
2. Identified relevant professional competencies and developed an instructional plan for their assessment and attainment.
3. Designed an outreach and vetting plan for students.
4. Created a plan to embed support services for students that leverages the respective expertise and talents of each member of the partnership into a learning model.
5. Built a process to track student progress, if none already exists.
6. Developed an implementation plan and a budget in collaboration with Commonwealth Corporation.
7. Enhanced their capacity for effective digital instruction.

One exciting outcome of the collaborative aspect of the Program Design process is that pilot partnerships may create agreements to share responsibilities across institutions and pilot partnerships in order to leverage existing capacity rather than “reinventing the wheel.” So, for instance, a higher education institution with well-developed digital capacity may make an agreement to provide student support services for students in a school with a less well-developed digital capacity that is participating in a different pilot.

Phase 2: Implementation (July 2020 – June 2022)

During this phase, the first cohorts of incumbent employees will enroll as students in these new programs, after a comprehensive recruitment and vetting process. The flexible digital learning design will enable them to continue working (and attending to their other responsibilities) while studying. Commonwealth Corporation and the e-learning experts will work with the partnerships on an individual and collective basis to support effective implementation, generate real-time learning, provide additional training, and support the creation of new products and systems by the pilots.

GRANT FUNDING: ALLOWABLE USES, MATCH REQUIREMENTS AND SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIES



Program Design Phase (Awards up to \$50,000 per pilot): Allowable costs for program design include: salary for personnel who are designing courses and student supports; support for subcontractors and other partners; staff travel (mileage, parking and tolls); meeting expenses, or other reasonable expenses related to designing the course.

Implementation Phase (Awards up to \$150,000 per pilot): Allowable costs for delivery of the pilot include tuition and fees for first cohort(s) of students and other services necessary for the delivery of the cohort.

Match Funding Requirements

Partnerships will be required to provide a 30% match of total awarded funds both during the Program Design and Implementation Phases. Match may be cash or in-kind or some combination and may include:

- Staff time to engage in program design
- Anticipated travel expenses
- Rent and associated operating costs not charged to the grant
- Other expenses related to designing or delivering a cohort-based coaching, training and placement

Budgeting

Using a common template, invited applicants will submit a Program Design Phase budget using a template provided by Commonwealth Corporation as part of their full application. During that phase, Commonwealth Corporation will work with awarded partnerships to build their Implementation Phase budgets.

Payment to Grantees

Funds will be disbursed on a cost reimbursement basis. Partnerships will only be reimbursed for expenses incurred during the period of the contract. Lead applicants for each partnership will be

required to maintain and submit, upon request, back-up documentation for expenses and match contributions.



Program Scaling and Sustainability

By subsidizing design and tuition costs during the initial courses, we hope to facilitate participation of the first cohorts of students and help to offset partners' early investments in course design and student support. Our intent is to ensure that the pilots are designed from the beginning to subsequently be accessible and affordable to a wider range of employers and employees with similar workforce development challenges and to enhance the capacity of universities to offer digitally enabled, competency-based learning.

Affordability for future students is a critical consideration that might be achieved in several ways:

- **Financial aid:** Courses that enable students to earn credits toward an associate's or bachelor's degree are typically Pell Grant eligible. On both the state and national level, new legislation and policies are being introduced that would expand financial aid resources to cover costs of tuition for credentialed (vs. degree) programs. Commonwealth Corporation, along with various allies, is working in support of these policy changes.
- **Employer tuition subsidies.**
- **Innovative funding models** such as income share agreements may become a longer-term option.

PART III: APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS



June 12, 2019

Request for
Qualifications Released



June 26, 2019

Webinar for Interested
Participants



July 5, 2019

Deadline to submit
written questions.



July 12, 2019

Prospective
Collaboratives Submit
Letter of Intent



Aug. 30, 2019

Applicants Notified of
Status, Final Application
Distributed



Oct. 18, 2019

Final Proposals Due
by 5 PM



Dec. 6, 2019

Awardees Notified
(Anticipated)



Jan. 1, 2020

Program Design Contract
Start Date
(Subject to shift based
on award timing)



**Jan. 1, 2020 -
June 30, 2020**

Program Design Phase
Period



**July 1, 2020 -
June 30, 2022**

Program Implementation
Phase

STAGE 1: LETTER OF INTENT



Interested applicants should complete a Letter of Intent by **Friday, July 12 at 5 PM** and submit this electronically to the following link: <https://commcorp.tfaforms.net/328766>.

Your Letter of Intent should be no more than 4 pages long and be submitted on the Lead Organization's letterhead. The narrative and appendix should be combined into a single PDF document that is saved using the following naming convention: *Lead Organization's Name DILL PILOT Letter of Intent date*.

Please include the following information in your letter:

1. Overview of your proposed training program including:

- a) a rationale and description of the outcomes for participating workers and employers including credentials, promotions and wage gains;
- b) a forecast of potential skill building focus areas including "hard skills and soft skills;"
- c) a description of the planned support services for employees to successfully participate in the program, noting what capacities already exist and what would need to be created;
- d) if there are further requirements toward promotion or to move up the career ladder, applicants should briefly describe how they plan to support participants to attain the additional training and preparation needed. Describe your initial program design concept (curriculum, supports, advancement concepts, integrated ESOL, nudge, etc).

2. Beneficiaries:

- a) Which occupation(s) are you targeting and what occupations will your program prepare participants for?
- b) How many vacancies do you anticipate at your employer partners for this occupation in the next two years and how did you make this determination?

3. Higher Education Partner(s)/Training Provider Capacity: Please briefly answer the following questions:

- a) How would you rate the current status of your digital course offering? 1 – just getting started. (e.g. few courses, limited infrastructure and/or expertise); 2 – developing. 3- mature. Please comment on why you chose the rating by explaining the status of each of the components listed above.
- b) Do you currently offer any competency-based courses? If so, please list those that are most relevant to the proposed course.
- c) What student supports do you currently provide to digital learners? To working adults who have not attended college? Do you currently offer students preparatory guidance for online learning? Also, please briefly describe any systematic strategy that you offer to support student persistence and completion.

4. **Strategic Goals:** Beyond the establishment of this new training program, please describe why the members of this collaborative are interested in building a digitally enhanced, competency-based curriculum development pilot. Please include a brief description of the collaborative's current capacities, its organizational learning objectives for this project, and how the members' leadership will support the immediate and long-term aims of this pilot, including real-time learning and continuous improvement.

Appendix: Identification of the partnership participants. In addition to the narrative please create a spreadsheet that includes each participating organization and provide titles, email and phone numbers for each member of the partnership team.

INITIAL SELECTION CRITERIA

- Demonstrated need and sufficient prospective demand for continued training to build career ladders in the chosen occupation.
- Preliminary program design and participant support concept shows promise for building relevant skills and preparing students for wage increases and/or advancement.
- Engagement of employers with commitment to building and implementing a digitally enhanced, competency-based learning program as a source of qualified candidates to participate in the courses, and to subsequently fill open positions in the proposed target occupation.
- Involvement of higher education institutions/training providers with baseline digital course design and delivery expertise, and available health care instructional knowledge.
- Potential of collaborative members (individually and collectively) to contribute to the design and establishment of an ecosystem of lifelong learning, including the successful scaling of successful future pilots.

Letters of intent will be reviewed and projects that align with the objectives and goals of the DILL Initiative will be invited to submit a full proposal. We anticipate notifying applicants of their invitation to submit a full proposal by **Friday, October 18, 2019 at 5 PM.**

STAGE 2: FULL PROPOSAL FROM INVITED APPLICANTS



Commonwealth Corporation will provide all invited applicants a final list of questions for submission in a narrative that will be approximately 10 pages. We forecast asking finalists to provide answers to the following types of questions which we are providing to structure applicants' preliminary RFQ planning:

1. Project Overview

An overall description of the project and how it aligns with the objectives of the DILL Pilots including:

- The specific problem to be solved and need that will be met by this project;
- The audience and target beneficiaries for the project, including a projection of the anticipated numbers who will be trained as part of the first cohort;
- A brief discussion of how the project will achieve the desired goals.

2. Description of Partners/Collaborators

- The role and expertise of each partner including prior experience with core aspects of these pilots such as workforce training, digital design, competency-based design and support for incumbent workers.
- Description of any history of collaboration among some or all of the partners.
- Other partners, proposed vendors, or additional funding sources.
- Where possible, applications should include letters of support from potential partners. (These letters will not count toward the proposal's maximum length.)

3. **Model Design:** Finalists will be asked to complete a Model Design Narrative (with questions to be provided) that articulates their overall program concept. It will focus on 1) the capacity to build pathways among employer partners; 2) prospective competencies that the program will develop and assess; 3) an inventory of wrap around supports might be provided with an accompanying rationale for their selection, a description of the existing capacity and plans for their establishment or development of new programming and how they will be integrated into the program model in response to the unique needs for their diverse workforce 4) the outcomes that the program is forecast to achieve. This preliminary blueprint will not only help reviewers to evaluate the strength of your application but will also provide a starting point for each pilot's model codification during the Program Design phase.

4. **Preliminary Project Work Plan:** Description of the planned structure of the work outlining the roles of each member, the workstreams you plan to establish, the types and frequency of your meetings, and the key deliverables you propose during the Program Design process. This draft will form the basis of a more comprehensive work plan that partnerships will create with assistance from Commonwealth Corporation during the Program Design phase.

5. Learning Goals and Capacity Building Contributions

- Overview of what collaborative and individual partners hope to learn through their involvement in the Program Design process and through initial implementation of this project more fully, including how you envision our pilots contributing to your knowledge and expertise for student learning, your institutional capacity, and the ecosystem of lifelong learning more broadly.

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- Description of what relevant expertise and experience members of partnership could share in the design and implementation of these projects that might benefit the first cohort of pilots.

6. Risks and Significant Challenge: Applicants address the principal risks and challenges that might impede their project's success in enough detail for the review team to understand any distinct characteristics about those risks and challenges.

7. Sustainability and Scaling Strategy: Preview how the project may be sustained and scaled beyond the project period, including a) any expected and potential funding streams and; b) the potential to offer the new courses/programs to a wider audience of employees or employer partners. In addition, applicants should note any additional matching funding from other sources.

Additional Documents: Finalists will also be asked to submit the following documents to ensure they are in good standing with state and federal law. Commonwealth Corporation will provide these documents and a more detailed description of this process upon notifying finalists.

1. Certificate of Good Standing from Department of Revenue submitted by Lead Applicant.

(Please note that community colleges, public vocational technical high schools, and public state universities serving as the lead applicant do not need to submit a Certificate of Good Standing. Please visit the Department of Revenue's website (<http://www.mass.gov/dor/businesses/programs-and-services/certificate-of-good-standing.htm>) for more information about the C.O.G.S. and to complete an online application to obtain a Certificate.

2. Memorandum of Agreement or Letter of Commitment

3. Program Design Budget

FINAL SELECTION CRITERIA

Below are the categories that Commonwealth Corporation anticipates using to assess Finalists' applications. Finalists will receive a rubric that assigns a point value for each.

- Demonstrated evidence of need and sufficient prospective demand for continued training to build career ladders in the occupation.
- Program design and support concept shows promise for building relevant skills and preparing diverse students for wage increases and/or advancement. Partners present a realistic assessment of likely challenges.
- Engagement of employers with commitment to building and implementing a digitally enhanced, competency-based learning program as a source of qualified candidates to participate in the courses and/or to subsequently fill open positions in the proposed target occupation.
- Involvement of training providers/higher education institutions with baseline digital course design and delivery expertise and available health care instructional knowledge.
- Collaborative members (individually and collectively) demonstrate a high potential to sustain and potentially scale the pilots and to contribute to the development of an ecosystem of lifelong learning through these examples.

APPEALS

Appeals of the funding decision may be filed with J.D. LaRock, President and CEO, Commonwealth Corporation, 2 Oliver Street, 5th Floor, Boston, MA 02109. Appeals must be filed within fifteen (15) days of the date of Commonwealth Corporation's notice to unsuccessful bidders. The President may decide to hold an informal review of the decision, and may decide to grant an appeal, deny an appeal, or modify an award based on information provided during the informal review.

QUESTIONS?

Please submit your questions in writing to DILLPilotQuestions@commcorp.org by **Friday, July 5 at 5 PM**. We will reply twice weekly and post questions and answers to everyone's inquiries on the Commonwealth Corporation website at <http://commcorp.org/available-funding/>, highlighting the newest submissions in green. Applicants can sign up at the following link to receive email notifications when new responses are posted: <https://commcorp.tfaforms.net/328768>.

All potential applicants and interested parties are advised to check the Commonwealth Corporation's website periodically for additional information and updates until proposal submissions are due.