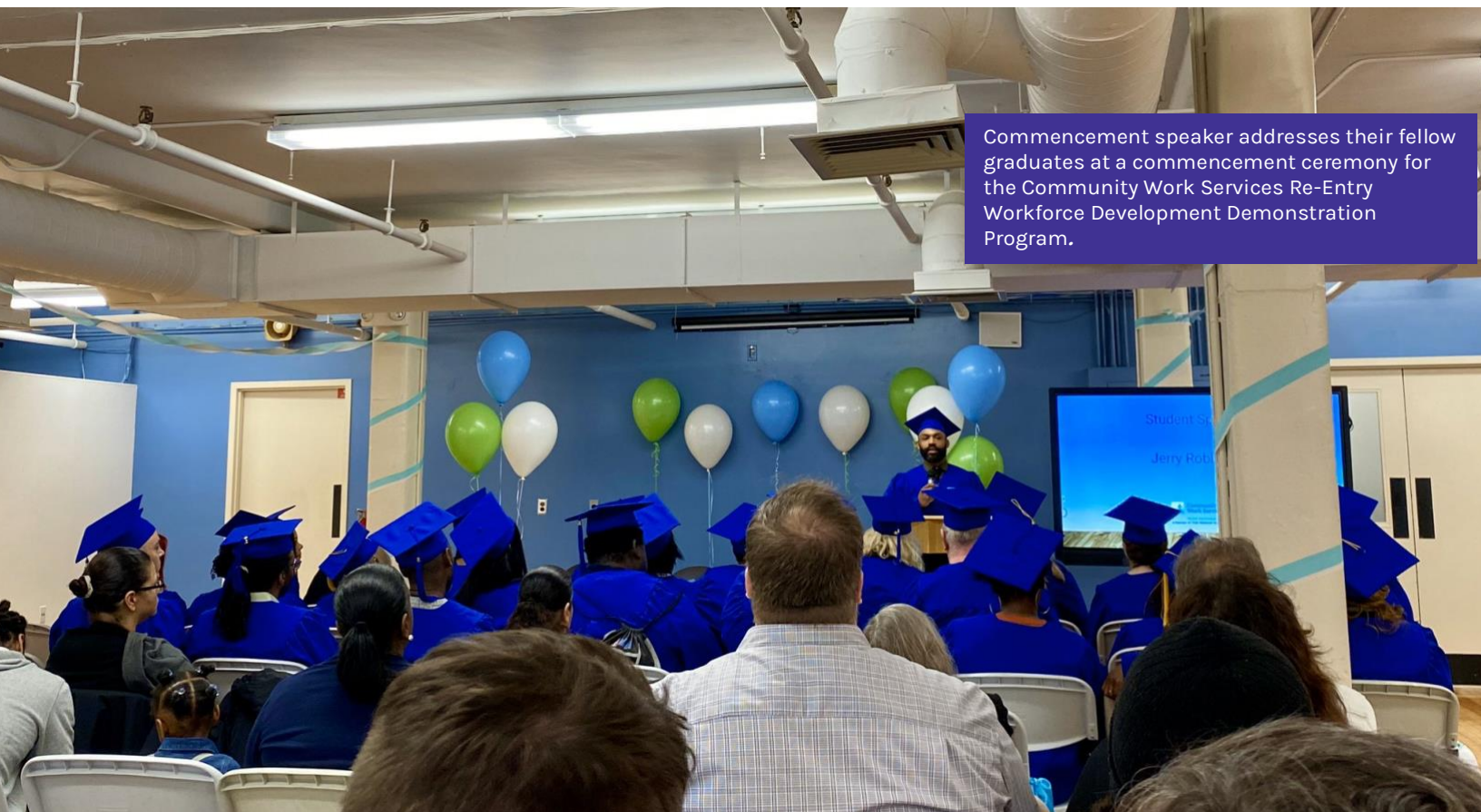




FY21 Re-Entry Workforce Development Demonstration Legislative Program Report

Submitted by:
Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development



Commencement speaker addresses their fellow graduates at a commencement ceremony for the Community Work Services Re-Entry Workforce Development Demonstration Program.

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Background

The Re-Entry Workforce Development Demonstration Program (RWDDP) is an initiative of the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, which is led by Secretary Rosalin Acosta. The program supports Governor Baker's efforts to improve workforce outcomes among individuals returning to their communities after incarceration (i.e. returning citizens). The program is administered by Commonwealth Corporation, which is overseen by the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development. This grant program is funded through a General Appropriation Act in the Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21) State Budget (7003-0150). The following legislative report describes the administrative functions of the program, and client outcomes.

Given the timing of the FY21 State Budget, and the required length of services to meet program outcomes for returning citizens, Commonwealth Corporation, with support of the legislature, awarded program grants spanning two fiscal years, starting in April 2021 and ending in June 2022. Additionally, the RWDDP was allocated \$2.5M in the FY22 state budget. These resources are anticipated to serve at least 12 grantees as a result of intensive outreach to smaller community-based organizations. An initial RFP was released in the fall of 2021 and resulted in 4 new grantees receiving funding. The second RFP for these resources was released in March of 2022.



Program Administration

Selection of Grantees

In February 2021, Commonwealth Corporation issued a Request for Proposals from eligible organizations to provide employment services to the target population in order to help advance their participation in job training, coaching and placement activities. Eligible applicants had to:

- 1) *provide an outline of the continuum of services for the program* (see example below);
- 2) *identify the specific program component* of the continuum of services they proposed to use the grant funds to support;
- 3) *identify the outcomes* to be attained by individuals enrolled in the program component of the continuum; and,
- 4) *explain how this outcome will advance the participants* along the continuum to unsubsidized job placement

Program Components

In this example, applicants could propose to use grant funds to provide one or more of these program components on the continuum to helping participants secure unsubsidized employment.



Case Management & Supportive Services

Eligible applicants included community-based organizations, non-profit education, training or other service providers, One-Stop Career Centers, and post-secondary institutions with existing, successful programs with demonstrated positive outcomes for the following target populations:

- Individuals in a Department of Corrections facility or transitioning back to the community
- Individuals in a House of Corrections facility or transitioning back to the community

Applicants were required to demonstrate that they had a relationship with an organization that has access to and would provide referrals to the program, including at least one of the following types of organizations:

- Houses of Correction
- Department of Corrections
- Office of Community Corrections
- Departments of Probation, either Juvenile or Adult
- Department of Parole

In April 2021, Commonwealth Corporation, on behalf of the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, awarded a total of \$1,246,000 to seven organizations. Grants will operate through June 30, 2022. The following chart provides information about the seven grantees, including the grant award amount and a description of the project.

Awardee	Award Amount	Description
Central Massachusetts Center for Business & Enterprise	\$178,000	Implementation The Central Massachusetts Center for Business & Enterprise partnership plans to work with Worcester County Sheriff's Office to engage returning citizens in the Advanced Manufacturing industry. They will partner with Riverdale Mills Corporation and Omni Control Technology, Inc to place participants into employment.
Community Action Pioneer Valley	\$178,000	Implementation The Community Action Pioneer Valley partnership plans to work with the Franklin and Hampshire County Houses of Correction to engage returning citizens in the Manufacturing industry. They will partner with Deerfield Packaging/Mayhew Steel and Hillside Plastics to place participants into employment.
Community Work Services	\$178,000	Implementation The Community Work Services partnership plans to work with the Suffolk County House of Correction, as well as the Department of Corrections to engage returning citizens in the Hospitality industry. They will partner with Star Market, Block by Block, Finesse Hospitality, and the Massachusetts Restaurant Association Educational Foundation to place participants into employment.
Massasoit Community College	\$178,000	Implementation The Massasoit Community College partnership plans to work with Plymouth and Norfolk County Sheriff's Departments & MA Department of Corrections to engage returning citizens in the Diesel Technology industry, specifically as of Diesel Mechanic/Technicians. They will partner with Milton CAT, Waste Management & Boston Freightliner to place participants into employment.
MassHire Central Workforce Board	\$178,000	Implementation The MassHire Central Workforce Board partnership plans to work with Worcester County Sheriff's Office and MA Department of Corrections to engage returning citizens in the Transportation industry. They will partner with Atlas Distributing, Inc. and the City of Worcester Public Works to place participants into employment.
MassHire South Shore Career Center	\$178,000	Implementation The MassHire South Shore partnership plans to work with Plymouth County House of Correction to engage 15 returning citizens in the Trades industry through an apprenticeship model, preparing participants for careers as Dock Workers, Laborers, and Painters. They will work with Teamsters Local 25, Laborers Local 133, and the Finishing Trades Institute of New England to place participants into employment.
New England Center for Arts & Technology	\$178,000	Implementation The New England Center for Arts and Technology partnership plans to work with Suffolk County Sherriff's Department to engage returning citizens in the Hospitality/Culinary Industry. They will partner with Whole Foods, Encore Boston, Haley House, and Dig Inn to place participants into employment.

Commonwealth Corporation Program Management and Technical Assistance

Service Details

RWDDP at its core, is designed to support both existing, larger agencies with capacity to implement services immediately, as well as provide training and program design support to smaller agencies that have traditionally been overlooked to due lack of capacity to implement larger-scale projects. Ideal implementation takes place over 16 months and crosses over two fiscal years. These grants are designed to operate with a Program Design window that transitions into full implementation.

Successful applicants will spend the first two to four months in a **Program Design** phase of their grant period meeting four times as a large network, attending TA Learning Communities facilitated by Commonwealth Corporation. These sessions will follow our program design model, beginning with Pre-Planning, followed by Planning & Program Design, and wrapping up with Implementation & Improvement. In between these four meetings, individual partnerships will meet with Commonwealth Corporation support to focus on partnership/site specific challenges and strategic planning for the implementation window. Commonwealth Corporation operates this structure through our traditional key components of successful program design model. This program design window will exist for all successful applicants, whether or not they have received implementation funds in the past. New grantees will spend this time designing their initial program, while prior funded grantees will spend this time working on program innovations and enhancements. All programs will need to submit an Implementation Plan using a Commonwealth Corporation provided template before they are eligible to implement services.

Once the **implementation** window begins, funded partnerships will be expected to begin delivering services. For the next 12 months, sites will meet with Commonwealth Corporation oversight monthly for TA Learning Community meetings as a network. These meetings will have topic-specific content based on feedback from the field, as well as best practice sharing opportunities. Sites will also be able to use this time to present case studies to the network for feedback and support. These regular convenings will also facilitate client sharing opportunities- sometimes clients relocate to other cities - sites can refer clients to each other if this is something that occurs.

Ensuring a 12-month implementation window is incredibly important to service delivery for re-entry clients. Many are transitioning back into the community with legal, financial, and court-mandated barriers that can take up to 8 months to stabilize. Allowing extra time for funded sites to provide the important and necessary case management required to support returning citizens in the first few months of their re-entry is key to a client's success in a workforce training program.

Around the final 3 months of the grant period, partnerships should be shifting into the **placement phase** of their program. This allows for a grace period if a client has a setback or is unable to achieve their 30-day employment placement retention outcome during the first attempt. It also provides a window of extended support if a client does successfully obtain 30 days of employment retention early-case managers can stay connected to both the client and the employer during this time.

Yearly Schedule of Services

Activity	Date
Request for Proposals Released	October
Bidders Conference	First week of November
Deadline to Submit Written Questions	December 15 th
All Answers to Written Questions Posted on Website	December 20 th
Applications Due	First week of January
Applicants Notified of Status	February
Anticipated Contract Start Date	March 1 st
Contract End Date	June 30 of the following year

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Program

FY21 Implementation awards were announced in March of 2021, with contracts beginning April 1, 2021, scheduled to run through June 30, 2022. As with prior years, following COVID, there were major ramifications for program implementation as House of Corrections (HOC) and Department of Corrections (DOC) facilities began to shut their doors to external partners in response to the omicron variant era of the pandemic. Due to the re-entry grants reliance on a behind-the-wall partner like a DOC or HOC facility, this effectively put an end to their recruitment efforts, or severely delayed their timeline for program completion.

Commonwealth Corporation has offered a wide variety of assistance, ranging from flexibility to allow programs to pause until facilities re-open, making connections between the grantee network via TA to share best practices and brainstorm solutions, and supporting programs making and nurturing relationships with other referral sources, such as regional probation and parole departments. Additionally, Commonwealth Corporation has relentlessly advocated for the much-needed ability for programs to spend resources across fiscal years to meet the needs and barriers returning citizens face as they begin their transition back into the community that COVID has only magnified.



Graduates of NECAT's Re-Entry Program at Suffolk County House of Corrections

Program Outcomes (to-date)

Timeline note on prior FY20 contracts: Due to the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic in the spring of 2020, RWDDP contracts to allocate FY20 funding were extended to end June 30, 2021. Grantees were able to utilize FY20 funds through the end of FY21. A few of the FY20 funded grantees were able to support individuals to complete programming by June 30, 2021. These projects supported 44 people in program completion and of those 21 graduates found and retained employment (or 47%) by June 30, 2021. As previously stated, many challenges disrupted services for the FY20 grantee organizations including COVID practices that did not allow correctional facilities to partner with organizations, which limited recruitment. In addition, employment placements were difficult to obtain in early 2021 due to workplace closures and continued COVID layoffs. Practical elements of training requiring participants to be present in person also presented unanticipated challenges. While some more academic elements of training were able to be offered virtually, some aspects of certification require clients to be able to engage with equipment physically. COVID safety guidance created barriers here that could not be circumvented for many programs.

Unexpended resources from FY20 grants due to COVID impacts were rolled into the FY21 grantmaking cycle. Several of the grantees from FY20 round awards negatively impacted by COVID re-applied for FY21 resources and ran concurrent cohorts for 2 months of overlap. FY21 contracts were issued May 1, 2021, and will run until June 30, 2022.

FY21 Funding: (14 Months – May 1, 2021, to June 30, 2022)

Total Funding/ Number of Grant Awards: \$1,246,000 to seven organizations (previous chart)

Total Enrollments: 95 individuals have been enrolled in programming to-date

Program completions: 45 individuals have graduated their training program, and are receiving case management supports as they work to secure employment by June 30, 2022

Active in Programming: 35 individuals are currently active in a training program

Employment Retentions: ongoing until June 30

Masked participants taking precautions against COVID while engaged in programming





Graduate celebrates commencement with local and state elected officials

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