Training Resources and Internship Networks (TRAIN) Grant Program

Community College Workforce Development

Request for Proposals

Issued by:

Massachusetts Department of Higher Education
One Ashburton Place, Room 1401
Boston, Massachusetts 02108

Contents

I.   Summary

It has been more than seven years since the 2008 Global Financial Crisis/Great Recession, and the reverberations continue throughout the workforce with national long-term unemployment[1] rates still far above 2008 levels. Nationally, studies show that those who are long term unemployed are older workers and disproportionally minority (Black and Latino).[2]   Here in Massachusetts, long-term unemployment translates into over 39,000 people who have sought, but failed, to attain employment within the last 12 months.[3] The Bureau of Labor Statistics, through the Current Population Survey, reported that in Massachusetts in 2014, the percentage of unemployed individuals who were long term unemployed was 34.6%. Long-term unemployment, compared to short-term unemployment, is particularly troubling because statistically the long-term unemployed have a low probability of re-employment. Over time, their employment skills, motivation to find a job, and self-esteem greatly erode leading to loss of self-confidence and the belief of future employability.[4] Eventually, the long-term unemployed stop looking for work.

In response to this challenging situation reflected in the troubling numbers of the persistently unemployed, the state legislature recently passed the Training Resources and Internship Networks (TRAIN) Grant Program. TRAIN authorizes the Department of Higher Education, in cooperation with the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, to issue grants to not fewer than two community colleges for the purpose of implementing training programs for the long-term unemployed. Qualifying proposals shall focus on the

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[1] The standard or common definition is continuous unemployment for 26 weeks or longer.

[2] See: Alexander Monge-Naranjo and Faisal Sohal, *"The Composition of the Long-term Unemployed is Changing towards Older Workers,"* The Regional Economist, October 2015 and John Mitchell, *"Who are the Long-Term Unemployed?"* the Urban Institute Report. July 2013

[3] BLS Data Retrieval: Labor Force Statistics (CPS). www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cpsatab12.htm

[4] Alan B. Krueger, Judd Cramer and David Cho., "*Are the Long-Term Unemployed on the Margins of the Labor Market*?" Brookings Papers on Economic Activity. Spring 2014 Conference.
http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/Projects/BPEA/Spring-2014/2014a_Krueger.pdf?la=en

development of skills needed to assist individuals in returning to the workforce. These skills may include: occupational or on-the-job training for in-demand industries in Health Care and Social Assistance and Professional, Scientific and Technical Services; job search skills and resume writing; effective networking.

State law provides that not less than $1,000,000 shall be expended as grants to community colleges, working in collaboration with regional one-stop career centers through community college navigators, to identify and engage eligible candidates who will (1) participate in workforce readiness and skills training programs, (2) be placed in employer sponsored internships (at no cost to the student nor the employer), and (3) receive monthly stipends to assist with associated living and travel expenses. The legislation further requires that the program shall be available to "individuals that have been unemployed for longer than 1 year". It is anticipated that this populace will require a comprehensive suite of support services given their extended unemployment status. Given these criteria and the requirement to expend funds within the current fiscal year ending on June 30, 2016, it is anticipated that only a limited number of partnerships (estimated 3-6 regions of the Commonwealth) are likely to qualify for awards.

II.   Grant Purpose and Priorities:

TRAIN seeks to support the long-term unemployed by providing eligible individuals with a comprehensive program of training and support services meant to result in meaningful employment.   The TRAIN grant applications must include the following components:

A.   The use of workforce readiness and skills training program(s)

B.   Employer-sponsored internships and,

C.   Monthly stipends for living and travel expenses.

A. *Workforce Readiness and Skills Training Programs*

The training needs of the long-term unemployed are varied and can be complex. As such, workforce readiness and skills training programs should be flexible to meet a wide array of regional needs. While not constrained to the following, programs should at a minimum

address the following two challenges (1) retooling and/or skills upgrading for displaced or formally employed workers, enabling them to expand and strengthen their sector-specific skills and knowledge for new positions in the same industry or for transition into new fields, (2) training programs geared to low skill workers who require a more comprehensive suite of training including both basic skills in academic and workplace readiness, as well as, targeted skills for a specific job or trade.

Based on prior experience working with the long-term unemployed and research into characteristics of effective workforce readiness and skills training programs, grant applicants should consider the inclusion of the following actionable components in their proposals:

- Deploying workforce/job readiness programs that equip students with basic literacy, numeracy and employment skills for subsequent progression towards more comprehensive training programs in specific fields.   Readiness programs could also include instruction and practice in workplace behavior and attire, presentation skills, communication and negotiation, teamwork, resume writing, interviewing techniques, information searches, and more.

- Collaboration among Workforce Investment Boards (WIB's), Regional Employment Boards (REB's), Regional Vocational/Technical schools and other community based organizations to provide foundation skill building, computer skills proficiency courses, online tutorials, personal development, and career navigation and counseling software. <u>Partnership with a local One Stop Career Centers (OSCC) is a required component of proposals per the statutory language. Applicants should provide a letter of commitment from their local OSCC that attests to their support of, at least, recruiting efforts for this grant.</u>

- Creating or utilizing existing comprehensive skills training programs to advance student attainment of certificates and/or credentialing in high demand industry areas sectors such as advanced manufacturing, computer science/information technology, nursing and allied health care, life sciences and financial services.

- Partnering with regional employers to provide students with hands-on, experiential learning in the tools of the prospective trade through internships or other workplace based experiential learning. Applicants must provide at least one letter of commitment from a local employer, demonstrating the capacity to achieve this outcome.

Proposals should leverage existing resources and/or workforce training initiatives of similar characteristics when possible, for example, Commonwealth Corporation's Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund. Proposed strategies should also align with and/or reference the industry sector priorities articulated in the Department of Higher Education's industry sector workforce plans. These include:

1) Nursing and Allied Health
   - Nursing and Allied Health Workforce Development: A strategic Workforce Plan for Massachusetts' Healthcare Sector.
   - Allied Health-Direct Care Workforce Plan: A foundation for Our Future.
2) Information Technology and Computer Science
   - Technology Talent Initiative Workforce Plan
3) Advanced Manufacturing
   - Advanced Manufacturing Workforce Plan
4) STEM
   - Massachusetts' Plan for Excellence in STEM Education: Version 2.0 Expanding the Pipeline for All

B. Internships

Another required component of the TRAIN grant program is the placement of qualified candidates in employer-sponsored internships. Additionally, internships are integral to the TRAIN program because research shows internships provide participants with increased employment opportunities and more marketable skills such as time management, written

and oral communication, critical thinking, and self-discipline.[5] A high-quality employer-sponsored internship should exhibit the following characteristics:

- Directly relates to the community college workforce skills and training program, reinforcing learned skills while heightening career awareness and vocational opportunities

- Articulates job description, expectations and work responsibilities

- Assigns mentors or supervisors to give guidance, evaluate performance and provide feedback

- Lasts over the time period of a student's community college training, and

- Leads to post-internship employment.

Successful internships are based on relationships where all parties (student, employer, school) mutually benefit. For the student, those benefits include:

- improved knowledge and skills,

- improved work habits,

- increased personal and social efficacy,

- marketable job experience, and

- articulated pathways leading to employment.

For businesses, those benefits include:

- increased workforce capacity,

- recruiting advantage – low risk, in-depth first look at prospective employees,

- opportunity to begin pre-development of interns as new employees, and

- potential for "fresh approaches" or new ideas.

And for schools, those include:

- bridging education to supplement and complement classroom pedagogy,

- demonstrated success in preparing students for jobs,

- improved job placement numbers and

- improved/enhanced relationship with employers. [6]

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[5] Knouse, Stephen B., Tanner, John T., Harris, Elizabeth W., "*The Relation of College Internships, College Performance, and Subsequent Job Opportunity.*" Journal of Employment Counseling,00220787, Mar99, Vol. 36, Issue 1

C. Stipends

Supporting the economic needs of student participants as they progress through the prescribed job readiness and skills training programs is vital to the success of this grant. In many cases, qualifying student participants will not have the economic means to devote their full attention to the training program unless support services are in place. Qualifying proposals will offer a suite of support services to promote student success for the duration of the program. Examples of support may include, but are not limited to, the following:

Academic:

- Tutoring
- Career Services
- Financial Advising
- Life skills

Supplemental:

- Housing
- Transportation
- Child Care
- Health Care
- Certification fees
- SORI/CORI checks.

Applicant community colleges are not expected to provide supplemental support directly. Rather, the grant requires community colleges to provide program participants a monthly stipend for living and travel expenses.

III. Eligibility

Applicants must be one of the fifteen Massachusetts community colleges. The training programs proposed by the community colleges must focus on meeting the needs of the long-term unemployed, defined as those unemployed for longer than one year.

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[6] Carl P. Maertz Jr, Philipp A. Stoeberl and Jill Marks, "*Building successful internships: lessons from the research for interns, schools, and employers*" John Cook School of Business, St Louis University, St Louis, Missouri, USA

Individuals participating in the program shall attend the community college at no cost and receive a monthly stipend from the community college for the duration of the program to assist with living and travel expenses. Community colleges may apply for the grant individually or in partnership with other campuses and other community based organizations in the region.

IV.   Program Participant Recruitment

Applicant community colleges, working in collaboration with One-Stop Career Centers are to identify, conduct outreach, engage, assess, recruit and enroll eligible candidate for participation in this grant initiative. Recruitment strategies conducted by applicant partners may include:

- 'Open House' events
- Informational tables at job fairs or career awareness events
- Promotional literature like posters and flyers prominently displayed or posted at all applicant partner organizations
- Website advertisement

V.   Proposal Requirements

Project Abstract

Not more than one page. Include the following*:*

- Lead Applicant Information
    - o Community College
    - o Contact Person
    - o Title
    - o Telephone Number
    - o Email Address
- Names and roles of other committed partner organizations
    - o Please include letters of commitments from said partners, which should minimally include one OSCC and one employer.

- Summary description of the project, including:
  - Training program focus (e.g. basic knowledge and skills) and advanced industry sector skills (e.g. manufacturing, health care, etc.)
  - Projected number of long-term unemployed served
  - Internship placement (provide employer name and contact information)
  - Target outcomes for participant job placements
  - Project timeline and planned outcomes
  - Key Project Personnel
  - Employer and/or campus proposed matching funds (encouraged but not required).
  - Amount of grant request
  - Alignment with DHE industry sector workforce plans

Project Narrative

Not to exceed 10 pages, with standard 1" margins, 1.5 line spacing and 11 point font.

A. Workforce Readiness and Skills Training Programs

This section should describe training program design, content, student recruiting and delivery modalities:

1. Training Design

- Describe the training objectives to be achieved during the project period and intended outcomes beyond the project period. For example, include the percentage of participants who will enroll, be placed in internships and complete the program.

- Instructional format, i.e. classroom, campus-based, onsite, online, hybrid.

- Adult student learning needs addressed through On-the-job training, hands-on experiential model, tryout employment, etc.

- Start and end dates of training and/or number of cycles of training, as well as length and schedule of training.

- Credit, non-credit training or a combination of both.

- Credentials earned upon completion of the training.

- Certification testing as a prerequisite for employment.

- Role of partners, if any, in support of the delivery of training, e.g. other postsecondary institutions, WIB's/REB's, One Stop Career Centers, Vocational Technical Schools, community based organizations, etc.

- Sustainable capabilities and capacities that will be developed and maintained at the campus as a result of this project.

2. **Training Program Content**

- Literacy, numeracy and foundation technical skills

- High School diploma equivalency (HI-SET)

- Workplace readiness

- Career Advising

- Interviewing and job placement

3. **Recruiting**

- Method that will be used to recruit potential students, and the role of employers in this process. Whether specific target populations (i.e. low skill or limited English proficiency) or certain industries will be pursued.

- The required involvement of the local One Stop Career Center in identifying and recruiting, potential trainees.

- The role, if any, of other organizations like the local Workforce Investment Board or other community based organizations in recruiting, screening and supporting prospective applicants.

4. **Wrap-around Services**

- Case management

- Financial literacy/supports

- Transportation

- Child Care

- Housing Supports

B. Internships

This section should address the employer relationship/involvement with the program by describing the internship opportunities and how the proposed internship will prepare participants to meet the program needs, including:

- How the internship aligns and reinforces the program's workforce readiness and skills training programs.

- How the internship benefits the students, employers and community colleges.

- The role of mentors and supervisors for guiding intern trainees, assessing performance and providing feedback.

- The expected length of the internship.

- The demographics of the target trainee population.

- The possible jobs for hire after completing the internship.

Community college navigators shall oversee the matching and duration of each internship placement.

Note: Local businesses participating in the program shall not be responsible for any costs related to the program.

C. Stipends

This section should detail the support services available to the program participant enrolled in workforce readiness and skills training program that will help eliminate barriers, both personal and economic, towards their success.   Details should include:

- A list of support services offered by program partners (e.g. Community Colleges, One Stop Career Centers, Employers, etc.) at no cost to the program participant.

- The expected monthly stipend to program participants to assist with their living and travel expenses. Include a list of and the costs expected to be covered.

D. Program Measures and Outcomes

This section should describe the expected outcomes from the program proposal including, but not limited to:

- The number of participants who will begin the program
- The number of program completers
- The projected and committed number of students to be placed in internships
- A list of businesses providing internships to participants and a description of the training received by participants through internships
- The number of participants who received full-time employment within 6 months of completing the program; (Note: this timeframe extends beyond the timeline of the grant. Additionally, it is the responsibility of the academic institution to secure job placements for participants and to report the information associated with these efforts to DHE)

VI.   Evaluation & Reporting

Project proposals will demonstrate a strong commitment to formative, and as practical given the time constraints of the grant, summative evaluation protocols. Grant funds may be requested to support ongoing project evaluations or for a new evaluation implementation. Funds for evaluation should not exceed 5% of the grant total.

Year-end status reports will be due August 31, 2016. All written reports should include the following elements:

- Narrative of project implementation including what went right according to what was proposed as well as unanticipated challenges and how you addressed those challenges.
- Evaluation report of the program/project's effectiveness and quantifiable outcomes. Include highlights both positive and negative.

- Participant data, including:

  o Students enrolled

  o Students retained

  o Students completed

  o Certifications attained

  o Internship Placements

  o Job Placements

- Partner involvement and activities executed

- Expense Report (actual and forecast)

VII.   Budget Information

- A proposed budget is required and must reflect expenses finalized by the end of the FY16 fiscal year. Please fill out the attached budget found on the last page of this RFP. The budget was created to automatically tabulate totals. To activate this automated feature, double click on the table within the budget document.

- In addition, please include a detailed explanatory budget narrative that supports each line of your detailed budget request.

- Be sure to also include supporting detail regarding any employer match, as well as any match from the college itself.

VIII.   Submission Instructions and Timeline

Proposals will be accepted through close of business on March 31, 2016.   Proposals should be formatted following the instructions outlined in the "Proposal Requirements" section of this RFP. An information session will be held by conference call on March 15, 2016 to respond to questions about the RFP. Information regarding the exact time and call-in number will be posted on the Department of Higher Education (DHE) website found here: http://www.mass.edu/strategic/work_train.asp. Anyone interested in participating should

send an email to Keith Connors, Program Manager of the STEM Pipeline Fund, at the address shown below. FAQs will be posted to the TRAIN section of the DHE website, as well as on CommBuys, after the session is completed.

Please submit your completed proposal via email to: Keith Connors, Senior Program Manager of the STEM Pipeline Fund at kconnors@bhe.mass.edu. Make sure to write "***TRAIN Proposal***" in the email heading.

RFP Timeline	
Release Date	March 4, 2016
Information Session	March 15, 2016
Proposals Due	April 4, 2016
Grants Awarded	April 29, 2016
Year-End Status Report Due	August 31, 2016

IX.   Awards

The Training Resources and Internship Networks Program (TRAIN) legislation commits $1,000,000 in grants to community colleges to be expended for qualifying workforce readiness and skills training programs, employer sponsored internships and monthly stipends to program participants. The funding range for individual projects is anticipated to be between $200,000 and $300,000 although the final award amount will be based upon the scope and merits of each proposal. Funding shall be awarded to not fewer than two community colleges. We anticipate awarding anywhere from three to six proposals. Grant funds must be expended or encumbered by the community college on or before June 30, 2016.

X.   Policies

Grant Disbursement

Following the applicant's acceptance of the award letter, and the execution of the Standard Contract, or the Interagency Service Agreement, and any other required documents, the applicant can expect to receive disbursements on a schedule consistent to the needs of the project.

Publicity

Grant recipients are obligated to acknowledge the funding source in all print materials, websites and press releases. The acknowledgement of the funding source contributes to the overall name recognition and branding of the Training Resources and Internship Networks (TRAIN) Program.

Solicitor Responsibility

Solicitors may not alter (manually or electronically) the grant application language or any grant application component files. Modifications to the body of the grant application, specifications, terms and conditions, or application which change the intent of this grant application are prohibited and may disqualify a response.

All costs associated with responding to this RFP are the sole responsibility of the responding organization. The DHE reserves the right to use any and all ideas included in any response without incurring any obligations to the responding firm or committing to awards for the proposed services. Responses become the property of the DHE.

Performance

Any funds distributed to successful applicants are done so with the expectation that the college will deliver the programs as described and serve the numbers of participants detailed in the application. If the applicant is for some reason unable to fulfill the program described in the original proposal, we reserve the right to recover funds distributed.

Legal Disclaimer

This RFP does not represent a contractual agreement by the DHE to any applying organization. Selected organizations will enter into a contractual agreement with the DHE upon award.

THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL RESPONSES AND THE RIGHT TO CANCEL THIS REQUEST FOR QUALIFIED PROPOSALS (RFP) AT ANY TIME PRIOR TO AWARD.

XI. Proposed Budget

Please complete the table below with a breakdown of the requested funding from the TRAIN grant program. Upon completion of the table, please provide an additional *Budget Narrative* that includes specific details of each budget item in the table. If the budget template below does not suite your needs, you may submit your own budget but be sure your budget includes all the identified categories below.

Categories	Total Grant Funds Requested
Total Salaries:	$ -
Administrator	
Support Staff	
Other	
Fringe Benefits	
Travel	
Contractual Services	
Total Supplies & Materials	$ -
Curriculum	
Equipment	
Other	
Transportation	
Training	
Tuition & Stipends	
Other	
Evaluation	
Indirect Costs (10% Max)	
Total	**$ -**
Plus Private Matching Funds	
Grand Total	**$ -**

Project Manager: _____

Signature/Date: _____