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Contact: Caroline Kirton

617-727-8158 ext. 1368

New State-Funded Training Grants Target Critical Industries

Commonwealth Corporation announced today that applications for funding totaling \$10 million are now being accepted for the new Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund (WCTF), a key component of the Workforce Solutions Act/Economic Stimulus Bill passed in 2006.

WCTF, administered by Commonwealth Corporation on behalf of the Massachusetts Department of Workforce Development, will support “industry-sector projects,” that will target a particular critical industry, such as healthcare or travel and tourism. Critical industries are defined as those that employ large numbers of people within a given region, have high rates of job vacancies, have grown significantly in recent years, and/or have a high number of employers.

The WCTF also creates customized education, training and other supports to meet the needs of that industry’s employers and current workers, and creates opportunities for under- and unemployed workers. Applicants may apply for up to \$500,000 for the three-year grant period.

Grants will be awarded to partnerships that include at least two employers as opposed to singular entities. Partnerships are encouraged to include their local workforce investment boards, one-stop career centers, community-based organizations, education and training providers, labor unions and trade associations. The grants will also specifically target youth and older workers.

“The sector initiative approach furthers the Patrick-Murray administration’s goal of matching training program dollars with actual employer needs. We need to make the most of every dollar we spend in workforce education and training,” said Suzanne M. Bump, Director of the Massachusetts Department of Workforce Development. “Linking it with the career ladder requirement ensures increased opportunity for low-skilled workers.”

Linda Rohrer, Acting President of the Commonwealth Corporation, noted, “The WCTF has the real potential to create meaningful projects and partnerships that can effect change both in the short- and long-term. We have seen, from past experience, that sector initiatives benefit workers and employers, as well as our state and regional economies.”

The deadline for applications is noon on April 2, 2007. Applications will be reviewed by a committee consisting of staff from Commonwealth Corporation, the Massachusetts Department of Workforce Development, and other state agencies. Application information can be found at www.commcorp.org/sectorstrategy.

About Commonwealth Corporation

Commonwealth Corporation, a quasi-public organization, receives financial support from the Massachusetts Department of Workforce Development.

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