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COMMONWEALTH CORPORATION

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Celebrating One Year of BEST Older Youth

The Building Essential Skills through Training (BEST) Older Youth Program celebrated its one-year anniversary at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester in June. **Lieutenant Governor Kerry Healey** kicked off the celebration with some words of encouragement for the youth that had participated in the program. The event included performances from the hip-hop group the Foundation, award presentations to youth and employers, and presentations of project successes and stories.

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Honoring an employer partner at the BEST Older Youth event, (left to right) Jane C. Edmonds and Lt. Gov. Kerry Healey present an award to Kimberli Walker, General Manager of Healthworks Foundation Fitness Center.

Conference Highlights Accomplishments in Research and Evaluation

The first annual Workforce Development Research and Evaluation Conference, held in Boston on June 22, brought together policy-makers, research and evaluators, workforce development professionals and others to take an in-depth look at research and evaluation in workforce development in Massachusetts and beyond.

The day-long conference was co-sponsored by the Massachusetts Department of Workforce Development, Commonwealth Corporation, Northeastern University, the US Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, Region 1, and the Massachusetts Workforce Board Association.

The day began with opening remarks from each of the sponsoring organizations, followed by presentations that gave an overview of research and evaluation, in Massachusetts and nationally. **Johan Uvin** spoke about the Research and Evaluation Agenda and the priorities identified within that document, then **Eileen Pederson** of the US Department of Labor, Office of Policy Development put that work in context by discussing the work being done at the national level.

The morning session concluded with presentations and a moderated discussion led by **Nancy Snyder** of the Boston Private Industry Council on the topic of state and local

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BEST Older Youth

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“BEST is helping hundreds of youth access training, education and employment opportunities,” said Healey. “At a time when our older youth struggle with moving ahead in life and gaining important skills, it’s gratifying to see real progress being made on this front, which benefits us as a Commonwealth.”

The BEST Older Youth initiative links at-risk youth, ages 18 to 24, with vocational skills training to help them pursue promising careers. The program also helps each youth manage issues of abuse, backgrounds with the justice system, concerns of teens and young parents, and transportation issues. In its first year, more than 315

youth participated in health care, manufacturing, culinary arts, banking, and information technology training.

The Lt. Gov.—joined by Director of Workforce Development **Jane C. Edmonds**—presented certificates of recognition to six employers who were involved in the program, designing curriculum, providing job shadowing opportunities, hosting internships, or hiring youth participants.

“BEST initiatives have resulted in projects that are enriching the lives of at-risk youth,” said Edmonds. “As the workforce of tomorrow, they are gaining the critical skills they need today.”

Research and Evaluation

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efforts to measure and manage performance and identify short-term outcomes.

The luncheon session focused on businesses’ and policy-makers’ perspectives on workforce development research and evaluation. **Alan Macdonald** of the Business Roundtable talked about what evidence of effectiveness of workforce development programs businesses are looking for. Policy-makers from the state, federal and local level then discussed what evidence of effectiveness they look for. **Constance Doty**, from the Boston Mayor’s Office of Jobs and Community Service, Massachusetts **State Senator Jack Hart**, **Jane Oates** from the Office of Senator Kennedy, **Jennifer James** from the Department of Workforce Development, and **Elmer Bartels** from the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission engaged in the discussion led by moderator **John Schneider** of MassINC.

After lunch participants had the opportunity to view the results of more than 20 workforce development research and evaluation studies in a mini trade-show.



The Workforce Development Research and Evaluation Conference included several panel discussions. Pictured (left to right) are Jennifer James, Department of Workforce Development; State Senator Jack Hart; and John Schneider, MassINC.

The day concluded with a final discussion entitled “Identifying the Long-Term Impact of and Returns to Workforce Development Programs.” This lively discussion brought together leaders in the field of research and evaluation, including **Andy Sum** of Northeastern University, **Michael Stoll** of the University of California, **Bill Ward** of the Hampden County Regional Employment Board and **Kevin Hollenbeck** of the WE UpJohn Institute for Employment Research.

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Mitt Romney, Governor; Kerry Healey, Lt. Governor; Jane C. Edmonds, Director, Mass. DWD; Jonathan Raymond, President, CommCorp