



COMMONWEALTH CORPORATION

SEPT/OCT 2004

Applicant Assistance Program: Restored and Ready to Help

The Applicant Assistance Program (AAP) officially re-started September 20 and is now geared up to again work closely with companies interested in upgrading the skills of Massachusetts workers. This comes after funding was not only restored but increased by Governor Mitt Romney and the Legislature, to fully fund the program at \$21 million for Fiscal Year 2005. With full funding in place, Director of Workforce Development Jane C. Edmonds and the Workforce Training Fund Advisory

Panel decided to re-start the Applicant Assistance program. AAP, operated by Commonwealth Corporation, was suspended in July 2003 when the budget of the Massachusetts Workforce Training Fund (WTF) was reduced from \$18.6 million to \$10.1 million.

“We are grateful to Governor Romney and the Legislature for their support and commitment to improving the skills

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Two New Rounds of BEST Initiative Launched

In July 2004, Commonwealth Corporation issued a Request for Proposals for the third round of the Building Essential Skills for Training (BEST) Initiative and in August 2004 issued an Application For Funding for the Community-Based Organizations (CBO) and Older Worker Education and Training Initiative.

These two rounds of funding follow the BEST I and BEST Older Youth Initiatives, which proved successful in meeting the needs of both workers and employers. BEST seeks to build partnerships within an industry and with the workforce development community, providing skills and career ladder opportunities to workers

and making companies more competitive. BEST issued its first round of grants in February 2002.

BEST III provides funding for employer-driven education and training initiatives that will help Massachusetts employers' economic well being while improving the

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BEST Building
INITIATIVE Essential
Skills through
Training

Applicant Assistance Program

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of our workforce. AAP will enable more companies to become more competitive as a result of building a higher performance workforce," said Ms. Edmonds. During its operation through the first 15 rounds of funding, AAP helped 494 employers obtain grants from the Workforce Training Fund worth more than \$37.3 million, to train an estimated 57,000 workers.

AAP's role is to provide impartial technical assistance to companies to help them assess their most pressing training needs, design effective training programs, set quantifiable measures of success, and link with training providers if they do not have the internal expertise. This all gets put into a competitive application by the company, which is then reviewed by the Department of Workforce Development and the Advisory Panel.

AAP returns with a leaner team as Doug Riikonen is rejoined by Robert Vitello, who will cover the Southeastern region of the state, and Johanna Hall, who will cover the Western Massachusetts region.

Moreover, AAP staff works closely with the Commonwealth's 16 Workforce Investment Boards, who monitor applications from their regions and conduct outreach and information sessions so employers are aware of the WTF process and new funding priorities. AAP staff are also available to assist companies whose WTF applications were rejected. Currently the WTF has three funding deadlines per year. The next application deadline is on November 15, 2004. To reach the AAP staff, companies can contact Doug Riikonen at CommCorp (617)727-8158, ext. 1241.

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BEST

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employment and wages of workers. Workforce Investment Boards, as the grant recipients, will lead employer-driven partnerships to design and deliver projects reflecting the needs of participating employers to increase the skills, education, and ability of workers in order to contribute to the economic vitality of their communities. Grants will be awarded, and the projects will launch their programs in the next month or two.

The Community-Based Organizations (CBO) and Older Worker Education and Training Initiative will award grants to help the unemployed (particularly low-income unemployed) find employment, improve employment for low income individuals or low wage workers, improve wages to a level sufficient to support a family or place individuals on a career path leading to such employment and wages.

Moreover, projects seek to have a positive economic impact in regions with high levels of unemployment or a high concentration of low-skilled workers. Grants will be awarded and the projects launched in the next month or two.

BEST is a partnership of

the Massachusetts Dept. of Workforce Development

the Massachusetts Dept. of Education

the Massachusetts Dept. of Transitional Assistance

the Division of Career Services

and Commonwealth Corporation

Commonwealth Corporation is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids are available upon request to persons with disabilities. (617) 727-8158; TDD/TTY (800) 439-2370; 529 Main Street, Boston, MA 02129

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