Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund
Round Two Implementation Application
Q&A
Updated 2/27/2008

Employers

Q: Do the employers involved in WCTF projects have to pay into the unemployment insurance (UI) system?
A: No

Q: Do the participating employers involved have to guarantee hires?
A: Participating employers need to demonstrate a good faith effort that they will work to achieve the hiring, retention and/or promotion goals set for the particular sector initiative.

Q: Do family childcare providers qualify as employers?
A: Family childcare providers qualify as employers. Given the small employment size of an individual family childcare provider it is important that the project both reflects a sector workforce development approach the industry needs and provides a career path.

Q: Can a trade association be considered an "employer"?
A: Only if it hires workers.

Q: Would you consider small businesses as part of a collective? Could they have fewer than 10 employees, but be considered a group?
A: Yes, as long as they are in the same industry or hire individuals in the targeted occupation and a career path exists or can be developed.

Q: We have one employer with huge vacancies – we have been working with them to create a curriculum to help fill those vacancies – you require two employers for sector grant – but this company is so big – bank needs accountants – that I am wondering if it would qualify?
A: The RFP requires more than one employer.

Q: Please define employers – we are a system of hospitals – are we multiple employers or considered as one?
A: If you have separate payrolls and HR departments, you would be considered multiple employers.

Q: If one of the companies within my group of industry partners is located a few miles over into another region, does that preclude them from participating?
A: No, it matters where the lead entity is located.

Q: It is allowable to charge employers a nominal fee for training of their employees, as part of a match or sustainability strategy?
A: Yes

Lead Applicants

Q: Will a project with a WIB as the lead receive preference over projects with other lead applicants?
A: No, the application scoring does not include any additional points for a project with a WIB as the lead.

Q: Can one organization be the lead for more than one application?
A: There is no restriction in the application for one organization to be the lead on more than one project/application.

Q: Are employers eligible as Lead Applicants?
A: Yes.

Q: Can an employer as a lead, delegate fiscal responsibilities to a fiscal agent?
A: Yes.

Q: Do you need to be a 501C3 (non-profit corporation) to apply?
A: No, for profit businesses and public institutions may apply.

Q: What if partners are in different parts of the state, who gets the funding?
A: The lead applicant, who is the contractor for the project.

Q: Are Public sector agencies eligible to apply?
A: Yes

Q: Does a Lead Applicant have to be located/headquartered in Massachusetts?
A: Yes.

Q: Can a WIB be a Lead Applicant?
A: Yes.

Q: Are Round 1 grantees technically eligible to apply for Round 2 funding?
A: Existing partnerships that have received funding through Round 1 WCTF are eligible to apply for funding through Round 2 WCTF only if they propose a substantial enhancement of the initiative as you have noted below.

Q: Can municipalities (ex. Local school systems) be considered “employers”?

A: Yes, municipalities may be considered employers. Please note page 8 of the application which outlines the role and responsibilities of employers as partners in the sector projects.

Q: Are state agencies eligible applicants
A: Yes

Q: Can a post-secondary institution be a lead applicant?
A: Yes

Q: Does a post-secondary institution need to be the lead applicant?
A: No

Q: Is any preference given for larger or smaller organizations?
A: No

Critical Industries

Q: Are the critical industries listed in Appendix C (List of Regional Critical Industries) listed in the order of priority for each region?
A: No

Q: If an industry is not on your region's list but is on another region's, must you still justify?
A: Yes.

Q: Can you post the methodology developed for the selection of critical industries?
A: Yes. For Method One:
The sub-committee charged with determining "Critical Industries" in the seven regions weighed various methods and chose a ranking system. Using this method, a "Critical Industry" is defined to mean an industry sector (using the 2 digit North American Industry Classification System code) that demonstrates labor market strength using the following labor market data sets:

1. Large base employment (based upon the Quarterly Census of Employed Workers)
2. High rate of job vacancies (MA Job Vacancy Survey)
3. Grew in the short term (past year) (based upon the Quarterly Census of Employed Workers)
4. Grew in the medium term (since 2001) (based upon the Quarterly Census of Employed Workers)
5. A concentration of employers as defined by location quotient. Location quotient is the calculated ratio of an industry's share of total local area employment divided by the same industry's share of total base area employment. In this case local area employment is total employment of a given region and total base employment is total employment in Massachusetts.

All of the twenty 2 digit industry sectors in Massachusetts were ranked against each other using each of the 5 factors and points were awarded based upon rank in each category. The industry sector's points were totaled to create an overall ranking. Each region was calculated separately using regionally based data. The top 10 ranked industries in each region were selected for the lists.

The labor market census and survey information used was for the period of the 4th Qtr of 2005. Long-term growth was determined for the period 2001 – 2005. Short-term growth was for the period of Jan – Dec 2005.

The labor market data sets used in determining the Critical Industries are available at the following link: http://lmi2.detma.org/Lmi/LMIDataProg.asp

Q: Is partnering outside a region OK as long the critical industry is in your region?
A: Yes.

Q: Will preference be given to critical industries on the regional lists over an industry that was not selected from the list?
A: No. If the applicant is not choosing a critical industry from the list, we will review your rationale for establishing "criticality." If it is determined that you have made an adequate case for the "criticality" of the industry chosen, then your application will go forward and be treated like any other application.

Q: Can you give examples of "other services?"
Q: With respect to financial services, is insurance included?
Q: In terms of "public administration", are you referring to municipalities too?
Q: How are educational services defined?
A: For information on all of the above, and any other industry definitions go to http://www.census.gov/epcd/naics02/naicod02.htm

For assistance in accessing these industry definitions, contact Linda Rohrer at 617-727-8158.

Q: Critical industry list: if two proposals come in and one targets one on the list and the other makes an argument for an industry as critical to their region, is the one on the list weighted higher?
A: No.

Q: What information should we use to make the argument?
A: There's no one methodology you must use; We suggest some combination of labor market information and local resources.

Q: What are our options for selecting a critical industry?
A: Bidders have two ways to show you are working within a critical industry – one is picking it from the list. The other is to make a case for one not currently on the list. Bidders have multiple options for making the case for an additional critical

industry not on the list – you can ask us for technical assistance to help you with that, if you still have questions. We can make any labor market information we have available to you to help.

Q: Is it ok if we target our grant proposal across several industries (i.e. professional services, healthcare, finance and information)? Or is the grant restricted to gaining funding for only one industry?

A: Round Two of the WCTF will support partnership projects either within a single sector or those whose goal is to develop upward mobility pathways for occupations that cross multiple industries.

Application and Review Process

Q: The sector our proposal is targeting is within an identified critical industry. Should we provide more information about this sector and the needs of the sector?

A: Proposals may include additional information about the sector to help reviewers understand the focus of your proposal. In addition, we reserve the right to request clarifying information or hold interviews with applicants.

Q: Are there planning grants available through this round?

A: No, grants will only be awarded to implementation proposals.

Q: If you're required to provide additional information in the narrative (eg. the questions for existing partnerships or method number two for identifying critical industries) will you be able to go over the stated maximum of pages?

A: Yes. You may use two (2) additional pages to answer existing partnership questions and one (1) extra page if you are using method number two for identifying critical industries.

Q: Our organization is currently offering a Nurse Assistant training program onsite, partnering with a training provider. For purposes of the grant application, we are proposing offering a similar Nurse Assistant training program on an ongoing basis at our organization and partnering with other employers. Would this be considered an extension of an existing partnership, or a new partnership?

A: It sounds like the CNA program you are currently running is similar to the one you are planning to run with grant funds, with new partner(s) and possible a new target trainee group. You should respond to the questions required of "an existing partnership".

Q: Is there a required cost per participant?

A: The cost per participant should be a reasonable cost based on the specific program you've designed and the training and services provided.

Q: Is there any advantage given to people or organizations that have applied before?
A: No.

Q: Regarding the submission of Audits for applications, what are you looking for?
A: If you are part of a very large organization, (eg. a state college or university) please submit the portion of the report that covers your component. Otherwise, we are looking for a copy of your most recent fiscal year audit.

Q: Regarding the submission of the electronic version of the application, do all the attachments need to be attached?
A: Yes. All required forms must be part of the electronic version of the application. Additional attachments should be scanned and attached, if possible.

Q: Are there additional points given for applications submitted by certified minority organizations?
A: No, but we encourage all organizations to apply.

Q: Do we need to have a Notary for any of the forms we submit?
A: No.

Q: Is there any preference given to less expensive projects?
A: No.

Q: Does the application need to be double or single-spaced?
A: No line spacing restrictions were set in the WCTF Round 2 Application.

Q: Are all WIBs supposed to sign off on application?
A: No, but you must inform all WIBs in your region, in writing, by February 1, 2008.

Q: Do WIBs play a role in evaluating proposals in the region?
A: No.

Q: If you are not funded for your project do you find out why?
A: Yes, you may request this information.

Q: Can you go for both the "older worker" grant and the Round 2 WCTF grant monies, or just apply for one?
A: We do not currently have an Older Worker application released. An application for Round 2 WCTF will not prohibit you from applying for future WCTF funds.

Q: Is this money primarily for those who have submitted a planning grant?
A: The Round 2 WCTF application is not restricted to those who have received planning grants.

Q: Is the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund Regional Implementation Grants Round Two an extension grant for the projects awarded last year? Or a separate round of funding for new projects?

A: The Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund Regional Implementation Grants Round Two is a separate round of new funding.

Q: If you receive a lot of proposals of merit in a region, how would you deal with it? Reduce amounts? Spread the money? What if there aren't enough proposals [for the funding allocation]?
A: Within each region, our objective is to select and provide sufficient funding to partnerships to support program design and accomplish the outcomes they have proposed. In the likely circumstance that there are more "proposals of merit" in a region than the funding allocation will support, our objective is to select and fund the best of those proposals. We reserve the right to negotiate budgets and scopes of service. After the selection and contract negotiation process, if we have not obligated all of the funds that have been allocated to a region for the purposes of this RFP, we will re-program funds for future applications.

Q: Who is generally on the review team?
A: The review team for this round of funding has not been established. Reviewers may include Commonwealth Corporation staff, representative from Executive Office of Labor & Workforce Development, representatives from other state agencies, members of the WCTF Advisory Committee, and grantees from past sector initiatives.

Q: How much of the WCTF funding has been obligated? How much is available?
A: In the initial round of WCTF a total of $9 million of the initial $11 million was obligated. This application proposed to obligate $5.7million.

Q: Does the review process take into account lead organizations that are receiving significant state funds?
A: We will use several factors to review proposed projects:

1. Objective of the grant
2. Innovative proposals
3. Ability of the lead organization to implement proposed activities and achieve outcomes.

Q: Is just one copy of an audited financial statement acceptable?
A: Yes.

Q: Is the lead applicant the only member of the partnership that is required to sign and submit Attachment 10 "Standard Disclosure Form."
A: Yes

Q: Should all partners be listed on Attachment 2?
A: Yes. Additionally, signed Memoranda of Agreement are required for all members of the partnership.

Q: Who should we contact with questions about the application?

A: Karen Shack and Theresa Rowland will be managing the question and answer process. Their contact information is found on page 15 of the application. Linda Rohrer will be providing more comprehensive technical assistance.

Q: Should we list all of our partners in the application by name?
A: Yes. Additionally, any partners to your proposal must submit a signed Memorandum of Agreement. Partnerships may also add partners during the implementation phase of the project.

Q: How complicated is the partnership document?
A: We really just want to understand how the partnership will work. If you can do this in narrative form, fine. If you want to put it into a chart with a description of roles, that's fine too.

Q: Is there a limit to technical assistance or timeline?
A: February 29, 2008. Limits to intensive TA will be determined by our capacity to meet demand.

Q: I don't know if I can bring together our partners for signatures prior to submission – can we use separate signature pages?
A: Yes.

Q: Can I create forms to convey information that is not included on the forms you are asking as attachments?
A: Yes, but we will not require reviewers to read any pages that exceed the number of pages allowable for the narrative, other than required forms. It may not be possible to read individually designed forms in addition to the required ones, given the volume of responses.

Q: Is there a limit on other attachments we might submit?
A: No, but we will not require reviewers to read any pages that exceed the number of pages allowable for the narrative, other than required forms. It may not be possible to read attachments, in addition to the required ones, given the volume of responses.

Q: If you get a grant one year, does it make you ineligible to apply for another?
A: No, not right now.

Q: Could you please distinguish between a Memorandum of Understanding and a Memorandum of Agreement?
A: A memorandum of agreement (MOA) or cooperative agreement is a document written between parties to cooperatively work together on an agreed upon project or meet an agreed upon objective. The purpose of an MOA is to have a written understanding of the agreement between parties. The MOA can also be a legal document that is binding and holds the parties responsible to their commitment or just a partnership agreement.

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) is a legal document describing an agreement between parties. It expresses a convergence of will between the parties, indicating an intended common line of action, rather than a legal commitment. It is a more formal alternative to a mere promise/"gentleman's agreement," but generally lacks the binding power of a contract.

Q: I'm working on attachment 7 of the WCTF application and had a question about column 1 of this table. It says occupation. Is this by chance intended to be population?
A: This column refers to the targeted occupation for which this activity is placing an individual on the path to reaching.

Q: On page 14, it indicates that "outcomes" are part of the 40 point program design section and "performance measures and business impacts" are part of the 15 point program impacts section. Is question 7 part of program design, question 7 and 9 part of program impacts?
A: Scoring is not directly related to questions in the Application Narrative Form. Reviewers will score proposals for all sections based on the responses on the Application Narrative Form, Budget & Budget Narrative, Implementation Timeline, Outcomes Plan, and Program Spending Plan.

Q: On the program summary form, what should be included in the number of participants served? Would this just include the number of participants that achieved the desired outcome?
A: This would include all participants served through WCTF funds.

Q: I noticed that there is no mention of attaching letters of support to the application. Do you recommend that we include a few select letters or will the reviewers not go beyond the required information in the RFP?
A: Signed Memoranda of Agreement are required for all members of the partnership. You may enclose letters of support for organizations that are not members of your proposed partnership. However, we will not require reviewers to read any pages that exceed the number of pages allowable for the narrative, other than required forms. It may not be possible to read additional attachments, in addition to the required ones, given the volume of responses.

Q: Under Attachment 10, Standard Disclosure Form Question 5,A Income Due From the Commonwealth--Should we include federal funds (other than Medicaid) passed though the State?
A: Please disclose all state funds (other than medicaid), whether they are just a federal pass through or originate at the state level.

Q: The question indicates that you would like a reporting of funds due over the period of the grant. Would a reporting of last year's receipts with a statement suggesting that this is a reasonable estimate of resources to come suffice?
A: Yes, this approach would be sufficient.

Q: Do the partners need to sign the same copy of the Memorandum of Agreement, or can each partner sign a copy, as long as all copies are submitted?
A: Partners may all sign one MOA or you may have separate MOA's for each partner with the lead organization.

Q: Who signs Attachment 11 (Contract Terms & Conditions Sign-Off Form?
A: The lead applicant.

Q: Is it permitted to make alterations to the required attachment templates?
A: It is not permitted to make changes to the required application attachments.

Q: On Attachment 6, where do you suggest we include the proposed training provider?
A: We recommend you include this information in the "Program Component/Activity" column, after providing the component name.

Q: Do you need a graphic depiction of the organizational chart of the partnership as part of the application, or is a detailed MOA sufficient?
A: A visual Org chart of the partnership is suggested to show the staffing structure of the partnership. The MOA outlines the actual commitment(s) that each partner has made, or intends to make to the overall project.

Q: Who needs to sign the MOA from each partnership?
A: You should have as signatory, a staff person with the authority to make and implement the commitments outlined in the MOA.

WIB Notification

Q: Will written notification to the WIB need to go to all Boards in the region?
A: Written notice must be sent to all Boards in regions

Q: What are the consequences if the applicant does not send a notification to the WIBs?
A: If they do not meet the requirement spelled out in the application, their application will not be considered eligible for funding.

Q: Does our notification to the WIB have to include all of the partners we will be working with?
A: No. It’s just to let them know in general what you are thinking about doing, so a few sentences would probably suffice.

Q: If we are thinking about two ideas and don’t know which we are going to pursue, should we indicate that on the letter to the WIB?
A: Yes.

Q: Do you set deadlines on letters to WIBs from lead applicants?

A: Letters of Intent must be received at the LWIBs in your region by February 1, 2008. Also, if there is more than one LWIB in your WCTF region, you must send letters to all of them.

Q: Is it the lead applicant who should inform the WIB or each of the partners, or both?
A: It doesn't matter who does it – although everyone does not have to. Just one entity involved in submitting the proposal needs to make a notification, and a copy of your notification should be included with the application.

Q: Partners don't need to be identified in the letter to the WIBs on Feb. 1st – but do need to be in the grant application, correct?
A: Yes.

Q: If we plan to propose to provide services to employers or populations that cross two WCTF regions, do we need to notify all WIBs in both of those regions?
A: Yes

WCTF Regions

Q: Our project would like to provide services to three employers in region one (of the WCTF regions,) but also have two employer partners that are located in region two. Are we able to apply to serve both employers in region one and two?
A: Applicants may propose to provide services to employers or populations that cross two WCTF regions. However, applicants must identify only one region for which they are applying for funds in and would compete for funds in that region alone.

Q: Our project would like to provide services in both region one and two. Are we able to specify both regions on our application and compete for funding in both regions?
A: Applicants must identify only one region in which they are applying for WCTF funds. If you want to compete for allocated funds in more than one WCTF region you may submit separate applications, one for each region you wish to compete for.

Q: Are we able to propose to provide services in one WIB region or a geographical region that is a smaller than the WCTF regions?
A: Applicants must identify the WCTF region for which they are submitting an application. Applicants may provide services for an area smaller within the larger WCTF region. However, your application will be competing against all applicants submitting for that WCTF region.

Q: When selecting the WCTF Region for which we are submitting an application, should we use the address of the employers, the lead organization, the training provider or the targeted populations communities to determine for which region we should submit our application?

A: Applicants should select the WCTF region based on where the core activity will occur.

Q: In regard to the sub-regional allocations for the Greater Metro Boston Region, is it possible that Boston proper could receive two grants? What is the maximum award for a sub-region?

A: Yes, any of the sub-regions could be awarded two grants, with up to $1,095, 226 available. These sub-regions were established to ensure that grant awards would be spread across the region.

Partnership

Q: What constitutes a partnership?

A: Please review section VI on page 7 for requirements of a partnership.

Q: Can we add partners after the submission?

A: Yes. If you know there is a possibility you may add partners, say that as part of your strategy. If it is not planned and just happens, you can let us know after the fact.

Q: Are public-private partnerships eligible, e.g., if you have a trainer and a CBO?

A: Yes.

Q: Is there a requirement for regular partnership meetings (quarterly, monthly, etc)?

A: There is no requirement that partnerships meet with each other on a regular basis. However, we expect that applicants will describe how the partnership has made programmatic decisions and will continue to communicate to make ongoing decisions and resolve problems that may arise as the program is implemented.

Sub-contracts & Training Vendors

Q: Would it be allowable to procure training services during the implementation period, as opposed to identifying all training providers prior to submission of the application?

A: Yes. Please indicate in your application that this is your plan.

Q: Is it acceptable for one of our training vendors to be from out of state, assuming of course, that we demonstrate that they have a unique capability that we'd like to build into our programming?

A: Yes, with adequate demonstration of the "unique capability"

Q: Must vendors providing education and training services be approved prior to the grant award?

A: No. However, if post-secondary degrees or credentials are required for the target occupation(s) the partnership must include a post-secondary institution, such as community colleges, institutions of higher education, apprenticeship programs and vocational technical schools.

Q: Is sub-contracting allowed?

A: Sub-contracting is allowed, however, the applicant needs to inform Commonwealth Corporation of this. If this is included in your application you have met the requirement to inform us of this sub-contracting relationship.

Q: Subcontracting and staff substitutions: Northeastern first year students are enrolled in "Inside Track" – a program to help them understand their vocational track, etc. Can we use that program as a coaching sub-contractor? It sounds like we are restricted from sub-contracting.

A: You are allowed to use subcontractors, you just need to let us know that is your plan.

Program Design

Q: Can WCTF focus on "unemployed" in addition to incumbent workers?

A: Yes, you may provide services to both unemployed and incumbent participants.

Q: Is it ok to focus on one underrepresented population?

A: Yes. In doing so, you should demonstrate what steps your project will take to help this group achieve success in your chosen industry sector.

Q: Do you prefer more participants than less?

A: The number of participants is determined by the workforce needs of the industry/employer and the program design.

Q: Regarding the number of participants: Can you have the same participants over three years or do they all have to be new each year?

A: The number of participants, enrollment and service plans should be determined by the partnership.

Q: One goal is to improve access to jobs for all citizens. Can we use criteria listed in participant forms – age, ESOL, to target it to a segment of the population?

A: Yes, you can design your program to target a population exclusively, but it needs to be focused in a critical industry.

Q: Special populations – Is there any weight to special populations within industries?
A: No.

Q: Are there income guidelines or eligibility requirements for either unemployed or incumbent participants?
A: There is no income guideline for participants whether unemployed or incumbent. All participants will be asked to complete the data information sheet that was provided to you at the bidders conference and is available on line at our website.

Q: Is an apprenticeship considered post-secondary education?
A: Yes, an apprenticeship is considered post-secondary education.

Q: Is a referral to a post-secondary institution sufficient to provide supports that lead to worker achievement of post secondary credentials?
A: When partnering with a post-secondary institution, your program should include a design and level of partnership that would make most sense for the populations you are serving and the targeted occupations that they are advancing into.

Q: Do you favor a proposal that has a post-secondary degree program more heavily than one that requires just a certificate?
A: No.

Q: Are lateral moves considered legitimate parts of a career pathway?
A: Yes.

Q: Can there be any training at all for management?
A: Yes, if it is part of the design, and it contributes to the goals of the overall program.

Q: Is the WCTF similar to the Workforce Training Fund in that doesn't pay for trainings required by law, like safety training, for example?
A: No. If the legally required training is a requirement for entrance into the targeted occupation, it may be included as part of the program design and paid for with WCTF funds. If the required training is a requirement for the individual's current occupation, it may not be paid for with WCTF funds.

Q: Can we focus on more than one occupation?
A: Yes. It would need to be either more than one occupation in one industry, or a group of occupations that cross multiple industry sectors. The telling point would be if it feels coherent – does the program hold together. If you feel it does, make the argument for that.

Q: Can you use industry-required credentials as part of your program?
A: Yes.

Q: Can we use on-line curriculum capabilities? e.g., if we bring mobile computer units to a site with us on which we have loaded an on-line curriculum, would that be okay? Does Commonwealth Corporation allow on-line learning?
A: Yes.

Q: Will a proposal be scored down for using an on-line training design?
A: No.

Q: What have you learned as a result of the WCTF Round One projects?
A: Challenges faced by funded projects in Round One include normal challenges, including: (1) a partner representative leaves the organization and the partnership must engage another representative from that organization; (2) start up takes longer than expected. (We encourage Round Two applicants to include start-up time on the timeline); (3) A key business partner has an unanticipated business change; (4) Partners do not share a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities; (5) Organizations struggle to develop business impact measures and a methodology to collect business impact data. We encourage you to ask us for assistance in developing these measures and if awarded we will help you.

Q: What are characteristics of proposals that in the past have been successful in receiving funding?
A: Key characteristics include the ability to communicate the program design and how it is related to the targeted occupation(s) and needs of population and strong employer engagement. There is not one preferred critical industry over another, with the exception of the critical industries identified in the proposal.

Outcomes and Timeline

Q: Can a program be less than 3 years in duration?
A: Yes

Q: If our program does not have a strong anticipated wage increase for participating individuals, but is strong on the educational advancement provided, will the educational advancement balance out the lack of a sufficient wage increase?
A: It depends. A good program design should meet the needs of the workforce and business.

Q: We have a program design in which multiple levels of certifications will be pursued. If we reach a point where a participant is ready to test out of a level sooner than someone else, the block that shows number of training hours (on the timeline form) – how do we indicate that this varies between individuals?
A: Include that kind of detail in your narrative and refer to the narrative in that spot on the work plan/timeline form.

Q: On Attachment 8, Outcomes Plan Form, are they asking for an annual accounting of participants? Or the total for three years?

A: Attachment 8 should include all proposed outcomes for the duration of the grant period.

Budget

Q: If you are awarded a grant, how are funds distributed?
A: We will be making quarterly advance payments. The amount of those advance payments is determined by a project's spending plan included in the submission. Programs are also required to submit monthly fiscal reports that show their expenditures to date.

Q: Should we propose a budget for one year of the project or for the entire duration of the project?
A: Budgets should include costs for the duration of the project.

Q: For budgetary purposes, what cost category is career counseling?
A: Career counseling is a program cost.

Q: Can you list acceptable administrative costs?
A: Administrative costs are those costs incurred in support of project management, fiscal management and oversight, record keeping, and overhead costs associated with employing and supporting project staff. Administrative costs do not include those costs directly related to serving participants or enabling project partners to define, deliver and evaluate project services such as defining skill sets, educational objectives, career ladders, etc.

Q: Must a project have a full-time Project Coordinator?
A: We are open to alternatives to this staffing level, based on the needs of the project. Projects must demonstrate their capabilities regarding project coordination and all other project requirements. We do require that we have one contact who is fully responsible for this project.

Q: Can full cost of Project Coordinator be built in to grant amount?
A: Yes.

Q: Is there any maximum on what can be paid for consulting help?
A: No, but all costs will be reviewed for "reasonableness".

Q: How much "narrative" do we need to submit with the Project Budget?
A: Please submit enough narrative to make your expenditures and the required match understandable. Adequate narrative will reduce/eliminate the need for questions from the Review Committee.

Q: Can we add more categories under "Other" in the Budget Form?

A: Yes.

Q: There is no space in the budget form for stipends, can you include in “other information?”
A: Yes

Q: Can “marketing” costs be included in the Project Budget?
A: Yes, reasonable costs for marketing the program can be included.

Q: Will WCTF funds pay participants’ salaries while in training?
A: No. However, the salaries could be included in the 30% match.

Q: Are you able to provide stipends for unemployed individuals while in training?
A: Stipends to provide supplemental income to unemployed individuals while in training are allowable costs. Costs associated with support services, such as transportation, housing, child care, food costs, etc, should be included under the Support Services line item of the budget.

Q: Can you purchase software?
A: Yes, but it must relate directly to your program design.

Match

Q: How much paid leave time is required?
A: There is no paid leave time required.

Q: Are federal funds allowed to be used for "match"?
A: Yes

Q: Re: the 30% matching funds, should that be cash or match?
A: Both are acceptable but cash is looked on more favorably.

Q: Can release time count as cash?
A: Yes.

Q: Are matching public funds OK?
A: Yes,

Q: What is “Cash match?”
A: Cash match is actual cash contributed such as salaries, training costs, etc.

Q: Please give an example of cash match.
A: If a partner pays for part of a program, e.g., training, or release time. In-kind is for example meeting room space, or staff time from a partner.

Q: Are there any restrictions on what can be used for the 30% Match?

A: Cash and “in-kind” contributions can be used for match. Cash contributions will be viewed more favorably.

Q: Does the 30% match come from the lead applicant or the partnership?
A: Match can be contributed by any of the partners.

Q: Do we need to have the matching funds at the time we submit the application?
A: Applicants must demonstrate how they will provide matching funds. Matching funds do not have to be in house before submission of the application.

Q: Do match contributions need to be drawn down in a structured way, e.g., on a schedule, or can it be spread out over time?
A: You will be submitting a Program Spending Plan that will give us an idea of how you expect the flow to go; we want to understand what your best guess is for when and how match will come in. We do not want to find three-quarters of the way through grant that you only have one-quarter of match.

Q: Matches and tracking of matches – validity of the match? How do we document?
A: Financial reporting in general: we will be making advance payments, you will need to submit monthly expenditure reports, which include both grant funds and match funds. At the moment, we don’t intend to ask for the documentation to be submitted at that time, but we will come out several times throughout the life of the grant to monitor, and review back-up documentation.

Q: Do you care where the match comes from? For example, do you care if 10% comes from three partners vs. 30% comes from one partner?
A: No.

Q: How specific does the description of match need to be?
A: We are looking for source and type of funding, a brief description of what is being paid for, and how the amount was calculated.

Q: The grant language states total funds of $500,000 per grant available. Match amount is 30% - does that mean an applicant can request $500,000 from WCTF as long as they have an additional $150,000 match?
A: Yes, implementation grants may be funded for up to three years, with maximum total WCTF funding of $500,000 per grant available over that time period. Projects will be required to leverage at least a 30% match of the WCTF dollars.

Data Collection

Q: What data collection system will be used?
A: Funded projects will be required to use the Sector Strategies internet-based data collection system.

Q: Is the CommCorp data system accessible to look at now?

A: Yes, contact Theresa Rowland at 617-727-8158 or trowland@commcorp.org to arrange a viewing.

Q: Will Social Security Numbers for participants be required?
A: Yes. It is suggested that employers be informed up front about this requirement and that projects add a section in the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with employers to address this.

Q: Would lead applicants be required to collect any documentation to prove that participants were U.S. Citizens?
A: No. Keeping in mind that these are employment programs, applicants would be encouraged to counsel potential participants in order to determine if they would be eligible to work at the conclusion of training services.

Q: Are we able to collect additional information than what is included on the WCTF Participant Enrollment form?
A: Yes, programs are allowed to collect other information than what is required to be reported in the WCTF Database. We encourage you to view the database to ensure a clear understanding of the WCTF data reporting requirements.

Q: Are you going to provide organizations a format for database prior to submission?
A: We have a database for these sector projects. We have a guest site you can use to explore it. Information on how to access it is in the folder, or you can contact Theresa Rowland for assistance.

Q: Is the database web-based?
A: Yes.

Q: Do you require that participants sign a release indicating that the information (particularly SS#) is true, and that ensures their confidentiality will be respected?
A: Yes, the participant enrollment form serves that purpose.

Q: Individual participant data does not need to be included with proposal, correct?
A: Correct. It is a form that would be filled out once a grant is awarded and participants are enrolled.

Q: Does the database link with other databases so we can upload from another database?
A: Currently you can download into Excel, but it currently does not link with other databases, although it is on our wish list to create that capability.

Miscellaneous

Q: How does this funding differ from the Workforce Training Fund?
A: WCTF differs from the WTF in that it focuses on sector projects with multiple employers, allows projects to implement a full continuum of training based on a

needs assessment, has a focus on career pathways and allows for support services.

Q: Will there be another round of funding that deals with longer term education? If we apply for this round of funding, will we be prohibited from applying for that round?

A: Commonwealth Corporation anticipates issuing two separate requests for proposals in the spring, after approval from the WCTF Advisory Committee. The first planned application would be planning grants to retain older workers. The second planned application would be competition for planning grants leading to implementation awards for programs that would develop “Accelerated Integrated Upward Mobility Pathways.” The latter would seek different ways to help individuals enroll in and obtain post-secondary education/credentials than the traditional sequential or semester based approach. Additionally, there is a potential for additional funds to be added to the WCTF. Applying for WCFT Regional Implementation Grants-Round 2, and/or receiving this grant award, will not have an impact on an organization’s eligibility to apply for future funding.

Q: Are there any restrictions on the job responsibilities of the project coordinator? Would they be able to handle case management responsibilities?

A: Applicants should design program staffing as they make the most sense for the project and the program design.

Q: What if we want to start a project later than this year? Will there be another procurement or should we submit under this procurement for a start next year, or wait for a next round?

A: We do not yet know if there will be another round similar to this one. It depends how much is committed under this round, and also how much additional $ is put into the fund by the legislature.

Q: Is there an expectation of meetings other than the quarterly sessions hosted by CommCorp that our project will have to attend? Who from the partnership is expected to attend?

A: There is no expectation that all member partners from each partnership will participate in the quarterly Commonwealth Corp sponsored meetings. A representative from the project partnership, generally the Project Coordinator, represents the partnership at these meetings. Though other partner members are welcome to participate.