

# Massachusetts PY 2004 Workforce Information Grant Plan

## A. Statewide Workforce Information System Overview

Massachusetts' Workforce Development system is administered by the Department of Workforce Development (DWD). The Workforce Information products and services funded through this grant are provided by the Division of Unemployment Assistance (DUA) and the Division of Career Services (DCS) in coordination with DWD.

- **The process used to ensure that the SWIB can exercise its responsibility for ensuring that state workforce information policy is responsive to the needs of the state and local workforce investment system.**

The products and services in this grant were coordinated with the Department of Workforce Development as well as the Executive Director of the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB), to ensure that our workforce information systems are consistent with the Commonwealth's workforce policy and customers' needs. The Executive Director of the SWIB or his designee will be provided with updates on the status of each of the deliverables and provided the opportunity to offer suggestions and recommendations during the year. Additionally, the SWIB Executive Director will participate as a member of the Workforce Information LMI Advisory Group, comprising representatives from the local workforce boards, career centers, and state and local workforce development partner agencies and organizations.

- **How the statewide workforce information system supports the goals of the state's WIA/Wagner-Peyser Five-Year Strategic Plan for state and local workforce development.**

Our design and use of workforce information systems has always been guided by how they do or will support the state's Five-Year Strategic Plan. The core products and services are designed to meet previously identified customer needs and offer the flexibility for adjustments with changes to the Commonwealth's strategic plan.

- **How the grant activities are consistent with the strategic vision of the Governor and the SWIB.**

Information produced through this grant's funding provides the Governor and other state and local policy makers with labor market information profiles, expected job vacancies and likely demand occupations. In addition, we have recently reorganized our agency to better perform our stated functions, and to align these functions with the Governor's Strategic Plan, and also with the stated vision of the SWIB.

- **The strategy of the SWA and the SWIB for consulting with local workforce investment boards and stakeholders in the workforce investment system to determine customer needs for workforce information.**

The Massachusetts Workforce Board Association represents each of the sixteen Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs). Regular meetings have been held with representatives of this group to develop state and area LMI and workforce profiles. We will continue to meet with them to coordinate our efforts and ensure that we address their needs and concerns. In addition, the Workforce Information LMI Advisory Group of stakeholders will meet twice during the year to discuss customer needs and align products and services to identified needs.

- **The broad strategic approach for workforce information delivery to principal customers.**

Our goal is to provide timely and accurate information to our various customers in the forms that best suit their varied needs, even if this entails redundancy or overlap in our provision of data and information products.

- **How workforce information and services are delivered as core services to customers through the state's One-Stop service delivery system.**

Specific LMI and data, and occupationally-specific LMI, are available online to Career Center staff working directly with customers and to the general public through the agency's websites. Employers, policy makers, workforce development partners, economic developers and clients, at home or in the Career Center resource rooms, may also obtain any needed LMI information online from the agencies websites which include access to MassCIS, a career information delivery system, or from Mass Stats, a geography based LMI delivery system. We also provide specific training to Career Center staff on how best to use LMI to serve their customers.

- **A description of the customer consultation and satisfaction assessment method(s) to be used to collect and interpret customer satisfaction information and the principal customers to be consulted.**

For those accessing the web, an on-line customer service tool has been added to gather feedback and suggestions from customers accessing the LMI data pages and MassStats. We will use focus groups of customers to discuss specific information products, e.g. MassCIS. Customer satisfaction surveys are conducted following each LMI training session provided to Career Center and workforce partner agency staff. Our Workforce Information LMI Advisory Group, comprised of stakeholders, will provide us with useful feedback.

- **A concise summary of customer satisfaction findings for the most recent survey of products and services and the effect those findings had on the planned products and services for PY 2004 including how the plan addresses inadequacies or gaps identified by users.**

New web applications are being developed and added this year based on feedback from customers who use the survey tool and from those who phone in seeking information or customized data products. The expanded products include additional summary information from the Occupational Employment Statistics and Quarterly Employment and Wage programs.

Customer satisfaction was evaluated with two focus groups, where the participants were volunteers who had attended a Labor Market Information (LMI) workshop. This format allowed for a free exchange of ideas regarding the workshops and ways to add to, improve or change the format and/or the handouts presented in the workshop. In response to participants' suggestions the following plans have been implemented:

To address the most universal request for a "cheat sheet" design has begun for a small card, suitable for desktop storage, displaying DCS/DUA websites, their contents and potential use. The cards will be handed out at each future workshop, and mailed to those who participated in the focus groups.

The best and perhaps the only way to allow for "hands on" computer exercises to be included in the LMI workshops is to provide video conferencing to remote sites that are equipped with the necessary

hook-ups. An economic analyst would be assigned to each site to assist the twelve customers that can be accommodated at each of these sites. This feature would also respond to the request for “more frequent workshops in more diverse locations.”

Finally, in response to the suggestion for a way to increase LMI workshop awareness, research continues on a way to do a broadcast e-mail to alert all Managers, Job Specialists or Career Counselors of upcoming workshops, and to encourage participation. This broadcast would be in addition to the notice sent by the Training Department.

- **Identify funds leveraged or matched from funding sources other than these grant funds and how these funds will enhance delivery of products and services as part of the state’s workforce information system.**

Carryover funds from PY2003 and some supplemental funds from Wagner-Peyser will be utilized to fund the Job Vacancy surveys, the support services for MassCIS, to produce a second set of labor market information profiles and two additional LMI-101 workshops (refer to sections 4 and 6). In addition, the Massachusetts Department of Education is providing \$30,000 to support the work of MassCIS.

## **B. Core Products and Services**

### **State Workforce Agency and Labor Market Information Deliverables:**

Arrayed below are the plans and the direct cost estimates for the core products and services that will be delivered during PY2004. These cost estimates exclude the AS&T charges which come off the top of the grant. The total costs including the estimated AS&T costs are noted at the end of this section.

#### **1. Continue to populate the ALMIS Database with state data.**

All core LMI and required ALMIS Database tables will be populated for public use on date of the monthly and quarterly releases. We will move to the most recent version of the ALMIS Database after the receipt of the new version and updates to applications. Additional information used in the LMI web applications will be populated and maintained in common database formats. New or enhanced applications and tools will be developed using these core tables. Requests for information or formats will be handled timely.

Additional tools and/or database formats will be developed based on customer needs that are consistent with the Massachusetts WIA/Wagner-Peyser five year strategic plan and the needs of policy makers and economic developers. Customer requests come from the web customer satisfaction tool and from the Division of Career Services who are responsible for coordinating and providing information and services to workforce and Career Center customers daily. New tools for providing the new geographic areas and revised data series to the public, economists and policy makers will be developed based on information from these customers.

Principal customers include all workforce partners, staff and their customers, policy makers, economists, economic developers and the general public who have 24/7 access to LMI and workforce information applications, customer satisfaction surveys and e-mail support.

Key outcomes include immediate on-line access to information at time of release, access to all new metro geographic areas and revised data series for CES, LAUS and QCEW in spring of 2005, consistent information on all applications at time of release, enhanced applications and web tools based on customer demand and new ALMIS database formats for the expanded QCEW files that will be release during FFY2005

Estimated costs: PY 2004 Funds - \$71,943 -- \$64,943 for staff PS/PB, \$5,000 for software upgrades, \$2,000 for travel.

## **2. Produce and disseminate industry and occupational employment projections.**

The DCS will complete and publish the 2002-2012 statewide long-term industry and occupational projections by June 2005 using the methodology, software tools and guidelines developed by the Projections consortium and the Projections Managing Partnership. DCS will carefully review its projections for health care and high-technology, and based upon that analysis may develop several projection spin-offs that analyze the current structure and projected shifts in health care and high-tech industries. Projected growth replacement needs on both an industry and occupational basis will also be analyzed.

Based on the weak US recovery and the fact that Massachusetts still has not seen strong enough job growth to make a significant dent in the state's job loss picture, an assessment of the feasibility of developing short-term industry and occupational projections for 2004-2006 will be made by second quarter 2005. Most hiring plans in Massachusetts and across the state's 7 regions are being measured by the state's Job Vacancy Survey. Conducted twice a year for the past two years, this survey shows that planned hiring has been highly concentrated in health care. On an occupational basis, hiring is just as concentrated, with demand for RNs, LPNs, technicians, and other support workers accounting for the bulk of employers' job postings. Since very few industries outside of health care are hiring or showing solid consistent job growth from one quarter to another, we may postpone development of these short-term projections. However, if Massachusetts' recovery strengthens and the demand for workers becomes more broadly based, we may develop 2 year projections.

To improve the short-term estimates of job openings due to replacement needs which account for the vast majority of job openings, we may also consider comparing and contrasting the rate of replacement as contained in the MicroMatrix System to the job vacancy rates. Based on this analysis, a decision will be made regarding adjustments for short-term replacement rates.

Massachusetts' estimates of job growth and replacement needs are widely used by educators, career counselors, policy makers, government agencies and businesses. As the state's workforce ages and health shortages develop, the projections information will become even more widely used.

Estimated Costs: PY 2004 Funds - \$100,316 -- \$98,316 for staff PS/PB and \$2,000 for travel.

## **State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB)/State Workforce Agency (SWA) Deliverables**

### **3. Provide occupational and career information products for public use.**

Two job vacancies surveys will be conducted during PY 2004 for the state and the 7 regions, one in the fall to collect 4<sup>th</sup> quarter hiring and another in March to collect 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2005 vacancies.

Information from the survey conducted in the spring of 2004 will be published in the fall and information from the fall 2004 survey will be published in the spring 2005.

In spring 2005, with data available from 5 survey rounds, DCS will begin analyzing the variance in job vacancies by area, industry, and size class and use this information to draw better samples and obtain better job vacancy estimates. An evaluation of industry/area response rates will be conducted and we will weigh the costs of collecting data from industries that find it difficult to respond to the survey.

To transform the Job Vacancy Survey into a more demand drive labor market vehicle that meets the needs of local businesses, educators, and policy makers, revisions will be made to questions related to business hiring expectations, business training needs and business training institution preferences. To provide educators and policy makers with better information, we will ask employers to use a scale to rate their new hires' skills in seven areas. The design of this question should help policy makers better target their education and training dollars more effectively on an industry basis, and help DCS/DUA train workers for better paying jobs.

Estimated Costs: PY 2003 Funds - \$293,131 -- \$183,800 for staff PS/PB and \$109,331 for contracted temporary help. PY 2004 Funds - \$46,169 for contracted temporary help.

During the year, DCS will disseminate customer-focused occupational and career information. Developed in cooperation with customers and other stakeholders, the career information will again be O\*NET based. It will include occupational skill requirements, user-friendly descriptions, wages, and current and forecast employment by occupation. The Massachusetts Career Information System (MassCIS) will include this occupational information, plus links to America's Job Bank, and to education and training venues. These venues include colleges and universities nationwide, as well as proprietary training schools throughout Massachusetts. DCS will develop the database of information on proprietary schools in the Commonwealth. MassCIS will continue to be available free to all state residents on an Internet site. DCS will provide training and technical assistance for MassCIS. Brochures for parents, Career Center personnel, and others will also be prepared. DCS will monitor usage of the MassCIS web site, and obtain feedback on MassCIS from focus groups and a survey of Career Centers. Principal customers for these products include Career Center planners, counselors, and administrators, elementary and secondary school career counselors, job seekers, employers, libraries, and parents. MassCIS has a contract with intoCareers (University of Oregon) to use the national CIS program, and to host the MassCIS web site.

Estimated costs: PY 2003 Funds - \$36,546 for the intoCareers contract; PY 2004 Funds \$276,440 -- \$36,070 for the intoCareers contract, \$240,370 for staff PS/PB.

**4. Ensure that workforce information and support required by state and local workforce investment boards are provided.**

One set of semi annual labor market information profiles for both the state and the 16 Workforce Investment Board (WIB) regions will be produced by DCS. The profiles will be published in September 2004. By participating in an interagency work group that includes strong WIB participation, we will be better equipped to design and expand the data components for regional workforce development profiles that meet customer needs. DCS will continue to consult with key members of the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) to ascertain which key indicators of labor market demand and supply are needed to develop the capacity of regions to use current

labor market and labor force data for planning, analysis, and policy development purposes. By providing access to relevant and easy to understand labor market information, workforce development officials will be able to build the capacity of their regions to analyze, interpret, and use labor market data on an ongoing basis. In addition to the WIBs, these profiles will serve the needs of key customers including workforce development agencies and partners, jobseekers, employers and policy makers. DCS will supplement the LMI grant funding with other appropriate funding to produce a second set of semi annual labor market information profiles.

Estimated costs: PY 2004 Funds -- \$66,014 for staff PS/PB.

#### **5. Maintain and enhance electronic state workforce information delivery systems.**

The costs for maintaining core LMI and workforce information web products and tools that use the ALMIS database are included in deliverable number one. Developing new tools, applications web displays to enhance customer support are included in this deliverable. Plans include adding new tables for at glance comparisons for most recent monthly and quarterly information, installing the latest version of MassStats, MA version of North Carolina's web SARAS, developing new linkages to MassStats and other tools directly from state web pages to expand customer access and responding to workforce partner and SWIB requests. We have earmarked \$32,800 for developing an interagency agreement for technical assistance to enhance our website presentations.

Milestones include quarterly assessments of workforce customer request and suggestions provided by DCS and DUA and establishing implementation plans; implementation of customized versions of Occupational Employment and Wage information by LWIB in November 2004 and implementation of revised data series based on new geographic changes to labor market areas in March 2005. Key customers are the workforce partners, SWIB and LWIBs and the public.

Estimated costs: PY 2004 Funds - \$51,036 -- \$16,236 for staff PS/PB, \$32,800 for web enhancement, \$2,000 for travel and training.

#### **6. Support state workforce information training activities.**

LMI-101, a training course designed for counselors with input from the WIBS, will be expanded and enhanced. The enhancement will include suggestions and recommendations from the April 2004 focus group panels. The courses will be offered to Career Center and Workforce Area counselors and staff in December 2004. Two introductory training sessions on the utilization of labor market information for program planning, job development, placement and career counseling will be provided. Principal customers include WIBs, Career Centers and workforce development service providers. DCS will supplement the LMI grant funding with other appropriate funding to deliver two additional LMI-101 workshops as well as customized workshops focusing on the use of LMI data for specific regions and data specific users.

Estimated costs: PY 2004 Funds - \$31,931 -- \$23,931 for staff PS/PB, \$8,000 for software, materials, and travel.

## C. Consultation and Customer Satisfaction Assessment

Responsibility for consultation with customers and customer satisfaction assessment is shared by both Divisions (Division of Unemployment Assistance's Economic Research and Division of Career Services' Economic Analysis Office) that are involved in delivering workforce information products and services to Massachusetts' workforce development partners including Career Centers and LWIBs. DCS is in contact day to day contact with Career Centers, LWIBS and their staff and handles information requests, survey the partners for determining needs for additional services and products and provide quarterly information on customers needs. Customer satisfaction surveys are done following each LMI training session and used to enhance the course and to develop new sessions. Additionally, we will conduct two focus groups with customers during the PY to assess the desirability of maintaining or enhancing our electronic information tools. The agencies LMI web site pages include a customer satisfaction tool that allows all users to provide feedback on the information and the tools. This information is used to assess the need for additional tools or changes to the site.

Estimated costs: PY 2004 Funds -- \$6,395 for staff PS/PB.

**Total Funding:** The estimated total costs including AS&T for PY2004 and PY2003 funds that will be used to supplement the production and delivery of the core products and services are arrayed below.

**PY 2004 -- \$792,980 - \$650,244 PS/PB and NPS; \$142,736 AS&T**

**PY 2003 -- \$402,046 - \$329,677 PS/PB and NPS; \$72,369 AS&T**