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SOCIAL POLICY RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

**STATE OF MASSACHUSETTS**  
**One-Stop Profile**

January 1997

Based on a Site Visit Conducted During September 1996

# STATE OF MASSACHUSETTS

## One-Stop Profile

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# STATE OF MASSACHUSETTS

## One-Stop Profile

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### DESCRIPTION OF THE STATE CONTEXT

The state of Massachusetts began laying the groundwork for One Stop implementation in the late 1980s. Fueled by widespread recognition that public employment and training programs were not meeting adequately the needs of job seekers or employers, the state embarked upon a long-term and fundamental transformation of its services and statewide delivery systems. In 1988, Massachusetts became one of the first states in the country to establish a new state-level advisory council—the MassJobs Council (referred to in this profile as MJC or “the Council”)—to oversee its emerging workforce development system. The MassJobs Council built upon public-private partnerships established by its predecessor, the State Job Training Coordinating Council, in its efforts to involve a wide range of service providers, educators, union representatives, government officials, and private sectors employers in the task of “reinventing” the public employment and training system.<sup>1</sup> The MassJobs Council and the Career Center Office—MJC’s staff-level implementation arm—have been charged with responsibility for overseeing and managing the statewide One-Stop initiative.

The motto for the workforce development system advocated by the MassJobs Council is “centrally guided, locally driven.” Thus, under the new system, most of the important decisions about who will provide services and how they will be provided will be made by regional entities. At the same time the MassJobs Council was created, the state legislature established a framework for local governance of its restructured workforce development system by redefining the mandate of the state’s sixteen Private Industry Councils and renaming them Regional Employment Boards or REBs. By November 1995, when the state was awarded a One-Stop Implementation Grant from

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<sup>1</sup> “Reinventing Government” has been a key theme in the state’s efforts to transform its employment and training system. This stems both from the popularity of the book by the same title, and the direct involvement of one of its authors, David Osborne, in the development and implementation of Massachusetts’ competitive model.

the U.S. Department of Labor,<sup>2</sup> Massachusetts perceived itself to be prepared for a massive reorganization of the state's employment and training delivery system.

Like a number of other One-Stop implementation states, Massachusetts is attempting to coordinate the design and delivery of all of the education, training, human resource, and career transition services available to Massachusetts' residents. What is unique to Massachusetts, however, is its commitment to establishing a new system shaped by competitive forces and driven by customer demand. Rooted in the belief that market forces are the best means of assuring quality, the "competitive model" adopted by Massachusetts is perceived by observers both inside and outside government as a radically new process for the design and delivery of publicly-funded services.

Massachusetts is the first One Stop implementation state to embrace a fully "competitive model" in its efforts to restructure employment and training services. The MassJobs Council's vision includes competition at three levels. First, Regional Employment Boards were required to compete for One-Stop funds by submitting proposals to implement One-Stop Career Center systems in their respective regions. The incentive structure was such that the REBs selected for early implementation would receive the bulk of federal implementation grant funds and would inform the implementation process in all other regions. First-year implementation grant funds were set aside for the development of One-Stop career centers in four regions.<sup>3</sup>

Second, public agencies, private firms, community-based organizations, and consortia were eligible to compete for selection as career center operators. Public agencies were not designated as "presumptive" service providers under the transformed career center system, nor were they given priority in the selection process. Instead selection criteria emphasized the development of innovative high-quality service designs and the delivery of seamless services responsive to employer and job seeker customer needs.

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<sup>2</sup> This included \$10.5 million in Implementation Grant funds, and another \$1.1 million in an LMI Information Technology grant.

<sup>3</sup> At the time of the evaluation site visit, the two REBs designated for early implementation had issued their RFPs and selected operators for four career centers. One of the four regions selected by the state in its first-round REB competition ultimately withdrew from the implementation process due to the eruption of a local political firestorm after it selected a non-governmental organization as a career center operator. Implementation of career centers has proceeded in the remaining three regions.

Third, the state required the selection of at least two distinct career center operators within each region. These operators would compete with each other (as well as with other private enterprises) for individual and business customers. It was believed that competition among center operators would lead to innovation, diversification, and specialization among centers which would increase customer choice and enhance service quality overall.

Massachusetts' plan for transforming workforce development systems is widely perceived as an experiment with the potential to inform other efforts at transforming the delivery of government services at both the state and federal levels. Among the questions raised by the Massachusetts approach are the following:<sup>4</sup>

- Can career centers serve everyone or do competitive forces and limited resources inevitably lead to limitations on service availability, particularly for “hard-to-serve” customers in need of intensive services?
- Are career center operators truly free to run their centers like businesses or will government requirements and “red tape” restrain entrepreneurial activity? Is it possible to simultaneously serve the public good and encourage an entrepreneurial approach?
- Does a demand-driven model improve service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer outcomes?
- Is this approach applicable in other states?

A number of key variables have influenced One-Stop implementation in the state of Massachusetts. These include (1) controversy stemming from the introduction of a competitive process to select the entities to deliver federal and state-level public sector employment and training programs including public Employment Services (ES) and Unemployment Insurance (UI); (2) the initiation of parallel state and federal reforms in related government programs, including school-to-work and welfare reform initiatives; and (3) recent and rapid growth in the state's economy. Each of these factors is discussed briefly below:

- *The use of a competitive process to choose service providers for public-sector education, employment and training, and welfare programs has caused tension between existing state-level agencies and entities*

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<sup>4</sup> These questions have been adapted from a document produced by the Center for Adult and Experiential Learning, one of the entities that has consulted with Massachusetts in the development of its One-Stop system.

*formally or informally involved in the One-Stop initiative.* Support for the Massachusetts “competitive model” varies considerably among partner agencies and departments. The fact that initiation of One-Stop career centers is associated with the dismantling of field offices of the Department of Employment and Training (which has been responsible for administering ES/UI services) has made it difficult for the MassJobs Council and the Career Center Office to establish good communication and coordination among key state-level stakeholders.

- *Parallel state and federal initiatives, including school-to-work and welfare reform, are increasingly perceived as linked to one another and to the One-Stop initiative.* Although such linkages have resulted in broad-based community support for workforce development, they have also subjected the One-Stop initiative to public scrutiny from a wide range of stakeholders inside and outside the professional employment and training community.
- *The recent rapid growth of the Massachusetts economy and the concomitant demand for effective vehicles for labor exchange have given momentum to the state’s One-Stop initiative.* The state has recently emerged from a deep recession; statewide unemployment rates have dropped to just over 5%. However, the economy has experienced fundamental structural changes: there are fewer manufacturing and construction jobs and more employment opportunities in the service sector. Individuals are changing jobs more frequently and employers are demanding new skill sets. These changes have increased interest among job-seekers and employers in new approaches to workforce development services of the kind offered by career centers under the state’s One-Stop initiative.

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE STATE ONE-STOP DESIGN**

### **Key Features of the State One-Stop Vision**

The state policymakers and consultants who were instrumental in developing the vision for Massachusetts’ new workforce development delivery system called for the development of a statewide network of federally-supported career centers, which will serve as the primary brokers of education and workforce development services for businesses and individuals. The system is being built around four main principles:

- *Universal Access.* The system will be designed to serve all customers, including employers, job-changers, and job-seekers.
- *Competition.* Career centers will be selected through a competitive bidding process.

- *Customer Choice.* Each center will offer a menu of core services available to employers and individuals, and additional enhanced services for which the centers will charge fees.
- *Integration of Services and Oversight.* Flexible federal program requirements will be adopted and state and local governance structures developed to support seamless high-quality services and high-performance practices in the career centers.<sup>5</sup>

These system principles were nearly identical to those outlined in the Reemployment Act of 1994. Although this legislation was never passed, it provided a framework that guided the development of One-Stop designs in a number of states, including Massachusetts. When the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) announced the availability of federal implementation grants to support the transformation of workforce development services in selected states, the four required federal themes included three—universality, customer choice, and integration—that were virtually identical to Massachusetts’ principles. The fourth theme—accountability—was perceived to be consistent with, but more general than, Massachusetts’ principle of competition.

*Required Local Programs.* In guiding the development of local Career Centers, the state required that a defined set of programs—rather than specific agency partners—be integrated into the service delivery system. Required programs to which career centers must offer access include:

- Employment Services (Wagner-Peyser);
- Veterans’ Employment Services;
- Dislocated Worker Services (JTPA Title III);
- Summer Youth Employment Services (JTPA Title IIB);
- Older Workers Services (Title V of the Older Americans’ Act);
- Unemployment Insurance;<sup>6</sup>
- JOBS and other training programs for welfare customers;

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<sup>5</sup> The planners of the Massachusetts One-Stop system were eager for the introduction of federal workforce development block grants to eliminate categorical program requirements, including restrictions on the use of program-based funds and requirements for program-based reporting. The failure of the U.S. Congress to pass block grant legislation has forced state-level planners to search for regulatory compromises to facilitate the delivery of seamless services through its One-Stop career centers.

<sup>6</sup> Unemployment Insurance (UI) enrollment has since been converted to a phone-driven system.

- Adult Basic Education;
- Community-college based education and training;
- Vocational Education programs (Carl Perkins Act funds); and
- Massachusetts Rehabilitation Services.

Interdepartmental Service Agreements negotiated between the MassJobs Council and the Massachusetts Division of Employment and Training also committed career centers to providing Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker services, Trade Adjustment Assistance and Trade Readjustment Allowances to eligible dislocated workers. Conspicuously missing from the list of programs required for inclusion in the One-Stop system during the first implementation year were the JTPA Title IIA/C programs for economically disadvantaged youth and adults. Although in principle, state partners agreed that JTPA services to economically disadvantaged individuals should be part of the services available through One-Stop career centers, the two-year contract cycle in use for the provision of JTPA services precluded their immediate inclusion in an integrated resource stream to support One-Stop center operations.

Consistent with the state's One-Stop vision, Regional Employment Boards have been granted substantial discretion in establishing a competitive process to select center operators, approving the core and enhanced services they deem most appropriate for their local area (as long as the state's required services are included), setting performance expectations for center operators, and overseeing the delivery of services within their regions. The state requires REBs to open the competition for selecting center operators to for-profit, non-profit, or public agencies, or coalitions of any of the above. Once selected and chartered for the delivery of services, local operators are responsible for delivering the core and enhanced services described in their charters. The MassJobs Council/Career Center Office in no way implies that the required programs are to be administered in the same way as they had been previously. In fact, the state encourages REBs to select bidders that offer innovative services.

*Required Services.* The MassJobs Council mandates the provision of the following core services to job-seekers, job-changers, and employers in each career center:

- *Core Services for Individuals* must include at a minimum basic assessment, job search assistance, local labor market information, access to job listings, and information on education and training programs and unemployment insurance.

- *Core Services for Employers* must include screening and referral of job applicants, on-line access to a job bank, and referral to sources of funds for worker training.

The MassJobs Council also requires the existence of non-core or “enhanced” services in each career center, but does not specify the content of these services. The content, delivery systems, and fee-structures are all to be determined locally.

The state has provided no requirements for the development of the physical facilities for One-Stop career centers. Rather, Regional Employment Boards were charged with evaluating the degree to which proposed facilities met the needs of the operators and the local communities they were intended to serve.

### **Relevance of the State Design to the Four Federal Goals**

Although the four federal themes are featured prominently in the state’s vision for One-Stop implementation, the MassJobs Council and Career Center Office’s commitment to supporting locally-driven systems and grassroots innovation means that the state has only limited control over how the themes are actually implemented. The state-level agencies defined the four federal themes, and then selected REBs and career centers based on their ability to realize these themes. The state’s understanding of these themes and the ways in which the MassJobs Council and Career Center Office support them locally is described below.

### **Universal Access**

Career Centers in the state of Massachusetts must provide all individual and employer customers access to free core services, and they must offer fee-based enhanced services representing more intensive screening, matching, and placement activities. As described previously the state requires that core services include basic assessment, job search assistance, access to labor market information, review of local job listings, access to information about local education and training programs, and unemployment insurance enrollment. The state has encouraged REBs to add to or expand upon these state-level requirements in issuing their requests for proposals to solicit bids from center operators. Potential operators are also encouraged to approach their proposals creatively.

### **Customer Choice**

The state of Massachusetts seeks to support customer choice in its career centers by ensuring that customers have (1) a choice of career centers from which to receive services; and (2) a choice of services within each center.

The state-level One-Stop design insures that at least two career centers will operate in every region. This design encourages innovation at the local level by providing incentives for the centers to compete against one another, as well as with existing private providers of existing services, in the development of new products or services and for increased market shares.<sup>7</sup> Customers may access services at either or both career centers serving their region. The state and the Regional Employment Boards also encourage local career centers to differentiate themselves by developing different service approaches and establishing specialized market “niches.” It is assumed that the career centers serving the same area will thereby develop enhanced capacities and expertise in different areas of service. This, too, is intended to enhance customer choice.

The state has also supported customer choice by encouraging diversity in the development and provision of technology-based products for customer use. On the one hand, the Career Center Office encourages center operators to develop and market their own new products. On the other hand, the state has invested heavily in the development of a statewide electronic interactive Job Bank that can be accessed through the state’s World Wide Web site on the Internet. The electronic Job Bank must be accessible from all career centers. In addition, it can be accessed by customers from any remote site with Internet access via modem. When posting information about job openings on the state’s automated Job Bank, employer customers have the choice of posting “open” job descriptions which identify the employer to interested job applicants or “closed” job descriptions which require career center staff to review applicant qualifications before referring an applicant to that employer.

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<sup>7</sup> Although the staff of the state Career Center Office and even the REBs describe the state’s goal as encouraging competition between the operators of career centers serving the same area, the staff of “competing” centers in the local region visited as part of the evaluation emphasized that they have formed high-quality collaborative partnerships with each other. These staff have coined the word “Co-opitition” to describe the mix of cooperation and competition in these relationships.

### **Integrated Services**

Key individuals and organizations involved in developing the One-Stop design in the state of Massachusetts felt that gradual integration of existing programs and services through the collaboration of existing provider agencies would not sufficiently transform the public employment and training system, and would risk losing customers to private sector service providers during the transition. “The only way to achieve *truly* integrated services,” one respondent noted, “is to construct them that way from the beginning.” Thus, the state of Massachusetts is building an entirely new system specifically designed to “consolidate all employment and training services into a seamless, well-coordinated, statewide network that is customer friendly and easy to use.” All career centers must adhere to this mandate, but the state permits considerable latitude in the development of local service designs. Massachusetts’ career center operators have organized their menus of services by function rather than by categorical program or funding stream.

### **Performance-Driven/Outcome-Based**

Performance measurement is a particularly charged area for One-Stop system development in Massachusetts. Because career centers will replace existing field offices of the Division of Employment and Training (responsible for ES/UI),<sup>8</sup> Massachusetts is under tremendous pressure, both inside and outside of state government, to demonstrate that its new approach to workforce development is more successful than the former system. Under these circumstances, there is great interest in comparing the outcomes of the old system to outcomes of the new system. At the same time, the new workforce development system has different objectives than the old system. For example, centers are likely to be engaged in career education and school-to-work initiatives for youth still attending school. These efforts are likely to result in outcomes that are not comparable to outcomes generated from the previous system. Negotiating measures that are both useful to the new system and allow for comparisons to the performance of the old system poses a formidable challenge.

State and local staff have developed issue papers on how performance measures can be used to hold Regional Employment Boards, local career centers, and the state

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<sup>8</sup> The state has made a commitment to place all public employees dislocated as a result of this shift into new public-sector positions. These employees are also encouraged to apply for positions with the career centers that will serve their local areas after the ES/UI offices operated by the Division of Employment and Training are closed.

system as a whole accountable for achieving desired outcomes. The state is particularly interested in measuring the performance of its career centers in the four areas of (1) customer satisfaction, (2) customer outcomes, (3) market growth and penetration, and (4) gross product.

*Customer Satisfaction.* The state seeks to support career centers in achieving 90% customer satisfaction rates within 100 days of opening their doors. Career centers are encouraged to use a variety of tools to measure their performances in this area, including surveys, focus groups, and service quality information systems. Regional Employment Boards are responsible for ensuring that customer satisfaction data are collected. They are permitted some latitude in developing methods for collecting such data within the career centers.

*Customer Outcomes.* The state seeks to support the career centers in ensuring that traditional customers of public workforce development programs continue to have full access to all core services and that the centers serve a population that is representative of the service areas covered by the centers. The Regional Employment Boards are charged with enforcing high achievement in this area. Career centers are each expected to achieve a 90% positive outcome rate (consistent with individual or employer customer service plans) for customers using center services.

*Market Growth and Penetration for Employer Services.* The state seeks to support the career centers in achieving increased participation of local employers in the workforce development system. Employer customer satisfaction is intended to be measured, and a 90% repeat customer rate achieved state-wide. Career centers are also encouraged to recruit a range of types and sizes of private-sector employer customers. Again, REBs are charged with supporting the development of local employer markets for workforce development services.

*Gross Product.* The state seeks to support each of the career centers in serving an average of 5,500 individuals and 300 to 500 employer customers annually. Career centers are also expected to develop a job bank of 10,000 openings (measured cumulatively over the year) by the completion of their first fiscal year. The state's investment in electronic service delivery mechanisms is intended to support achievement of these outcomes.

State-level staff indicated that the implementation of these more comprehensive and customer-oriented performance standards was among the long-term objectives of

the new system. They anticipate, however, that more traditional interim standards will be utilized in the short-term.

At the time of the site-visit, the Career Center Office had just begun to develop performance standards for itself and the MassJobs Council, including easy-to-understand measures of how well it is supporting the career centers in achieving system-level outcomes. The three general areas that will be addressed by these state-level performance standards include (1) financial viability of the career centers, including state success in developing an integrated funding stream to support center operations; (2) success of the state in developing the management information technology needed to support the delivery of technology-based services and program administrative functions; and (3) the integrity of operations of the career centers in both financial and programmatic terms.

## **ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNANCE OF THE STATE ONE-STOP INITIATIVE**

### **State-Level Organization and Governance**

*State Governance Structure.* Two different entities share responsibility for planning, guiding, and overseeing the One-Stop system in Massachusetts: (1) the MassJobs Council and its Career Center Office, and (2) the Regional Employment Boards.

The MassJobs Council was created in 1988 to replace the State Job Training Coordinating Council required under the Job Training Partnership Act. The Council's 33 members include appointed and elected public officials, profit and non-profit service providers and community-based organizations, union representatives, consultants, and private sector employers. The new Council, although comprising many of the same stakeholders as the State Job Training Coordinating Council,<sup>9</sup> was given a much broader mandate, including responsibility for coordinating all job-related education, employment, and training programs in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The Council concentrated its early activities in the following four areas:

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<sup>9</sup> Federal JTPA legislation mandates that State Job Training Coordinating Councils (STJCCs) secure participation by representatives of private sector employers, state agencies, the state legislature, organized labor, and community-based organizations. The MassJobs Council includes representatives from each of these areas, as well as from educational institutions and local governments.

- *Linking workforce development to economic development.* Early on, the Council perceived that an effective publicly supported labor exchange could serve as a valuable tool for economic development, and focused on developing regionally-oriented collaborative ventures between government and private industry designed to sustain economic viability and develop opportunities for economic growth.
- *Mobilizing broad-based private-sector involvement.* Because the Council was laying the foundation for a new system that would serve the interests of employer customers as well as individuals, Council members felt that it was crucial to secure private-sector input in designing and implementing the Council's statewide initiative.
- *Coordinating state-level agencies and departments.* The Council facilitated dialogue and strategic planning efforts between all state departments and agencies with oversight responsibility for state or federal employment and training programs. The Council also recruited new stakeholders not traditionally part of the employment and training network—such as welfare agencies and educational organizations—to participate in the dialogue.
- *Serving as a state-level policy broker.* The Council convened numerous forums on specific workforce-related initiatives such as school-to-work, education reform, and welfare reform, in an effort to inform comprehensive and impartial state-level strategic planning.

As part of its early One-Stop planning functions, the MassJobs Council also coordinated the activities of seven interagency work groups that were established to support One-Stop planning in the areas of (1) governance, (2) integrated funding, (3) quality assurance, (4) performance standards, (5) labor market information/MIS, (6) customer services, and (7) capacity building. The Council also convened a Commissioner's Policy Group, which comprised key policymakers from the planned state agency partners. Individual administrators were tasked with identifying sources of funds within their agencies and departments that could support career center services and discussing what roles their agencies would play under the new system.

Because the MassJobs Council is not a state agency or department, One-Stop planners anticipated that it would be viewed as an impartial entity without a special interest to protect in the transformation from the previous public agency-based delivery system to a new competitive system. However, over time, the MassJobs Council has taken on a greater and greater role in overseeing the implementation of the new career center system. This increased operational role was supported by an executive order by the governor in December 1993 declaring the Council an official Human Resources

Investment Council (HRIC) with statutory authority to oversee statewide workforce development programs.

Under its new role, the MassJobs Council is no longer viewed as an impartial entity, but rather as the primary agency most closely identified with the One-Stop initiative and responsible for coordinating and overseeing the statewide system transformation. The importance of its new role was highlighted by the designation of the state's Lieutenant Governor as the Council head. The Council continues to recruit and coordinate state-level agency participation and input in the career center initiative and facilitate the development of state policy to guide locally-administered career centers. However, as its One-Stop administrative responsibilities have grown, its relationships with other state agencies—some of which are being downsized and deemphasized as a result of the One-Stop initiative—have become more complicated.

The Career Center Office is the staff-level unit created by the MassJobs Council in early 1995 to support the implementation of the statewide career center system. The Career Center Office works with the MassJobs Council to accomplish the following objectives:

- Defining the state-level standards for chartering individual career center operators.
- Establishing statewide quality assurance measures for the One-Stop career center system.
- Supporting the development of high-quality labor market information products.
- Marketing the One-Stop career center system on a statewide basis.
- Providing ongoing technical assistance to local REBs and career centers as needed.

Among the chief day-to-day responsibilities of the eight staff assigned to this office are the creation of an integrated funding stream to support the operation of local career centers, providing capacity building and technical assistance to Regional Employment Boards and career centers, as needed, and coordinating the development of the state-level technology-based systems to support local One-Stop operations. The staff in the Career Center Office are employees of the MassJobs Council and are not housed with or assigned to any other state agency.

*State Agency Involvement.* In other One-Stop implementation states, system transformation has occurred with the active involvement of a “lead” state-level agency or department (usually the agency responsible for ES and UI services) with participation from additional state and local partner agencies. In Massachusetts, however, the MassJobs Council—the state-level entity most closely associated with the One-Stop initiative—is not responsible for administering any programs. Because the state is committed to developing a network system of career centers that are “centrally guided and locally driven,” the MassJobs Council felt that it was crucial to devolve significant responsibility and decision-making authority to local-level actors. Most of the key decisions about the design and delivery of workforce development services under the new system are being made by Regional Employment Boards and local career center operators, with feedback from the communities and customers served by career centers.

The key role of existing state-level agencies and departments vis a vis the career center system is as a source of funds to support career center operations. Through Interagency Service Agreements negotiated by the MassJobs Council and the Career Center Office, a number of state agencies have agreed to “redirect” substantial amounts of discretionary and categorical funds to the operation of seven chartered career centers in three of the four initial workforce development regions. In exchange for the redirection of these funds, the MassJobs Council has assured each agency that categorical funds will be expended in accordance with federal requirements and that categorical reporting requirements will be met.<sup>10</sup>

State agencies that committed FY 97 resources to support One-Stop operations include the following:

- The Department of Employment and Training (DET) has been responsible for administering the ES, UI, Veterans Employment programs, and Trade Adjustment Assistance/Trade Readjustment Allowance programs through a system of field offices. As One-Stop career centers open, DET field offices are closed. A total of \$5.8 million in DET funding was committed to seven career centers through an Interagency Service Agreement for FY 97.

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<sup>10</sup> These assurances have been met with some degree of alarm by the designated career center operators, who anticipated providing integrated services with block grant funds that had few reporting or other “strings attached.”

- The Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) is responsible for employment-related services to households receiving cash welfare payments. Through an Interagency Service Agreement with MassJobs Council, DTA committed up to \$3.0 million in FY97 funds for career centers to provide job search assistance to welfare recipients. However performance requirements may prevent career centers from “earning” all the money in the agreement.
- The Industrial Services Program has been responsible for administering JTPA Title III services to dislocated workers and providing business assistance and incumbent work training to at-risk firms. This agency, which is in the process of being merged with the Bay State Skills Corporation,<sup>11</sup> committed \$1.6 million in funds to support the delivery of core and enhanced services to individual and business customers at career centers. Funding will flow directly to designated Title III substate entities (the SDAs).
- The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission committed \$540,000 to support the delivery of career center services to individuals with substantial physical or mental disabilities.
- The Department of Mental Health was considering a contribution of \$250,000 to support career centers in providing employment-related services to individuals with mental illness histories.
- The Department of Education (DOE) signed an Interagency Service Agreement to provide \$200,000 to career centers for the provision of adult basic education services.
- The Commission for the Blind committed \$90,000 to support the delivery of career center services to blind customers.
- Because JTPA funds were committed to local service delivery areas through FY 97, JTPA Title II funds were made available through arrangements with local JTPA grantees. Only \$55,000 in JTPA Title II funds were committed to support career center system operations in FY 97.

### **State Framework for Local Governance**

The MassJobs Council was eager to create a structure for the local governance of the state’s career center system for several reasons. First, the state’s vision was that the service delivery system should be locally controlled. Thus, to be consistent, the Council decided to construct the system from the bottom up, rather than from the top

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<sup>11</sup> The new umbrella organization will be called the Corporation for Business, Work and Learning (CBWL).

down. Second, the MassJobs Council anticipated that state-level political turmoil might be minimized if local needs were able to drive state-level decisions, rather than the reverse. Thus, the Council prescribed a local process for One-Stop system design and implementation, but was not prescriptive in its approach to the organization of local workforce development systems or career centers.

Regional Employment Boards (REBs) are responsible for local implementation of the One-Stop initiative based on policy guidelines set by the MassJobs Council. The REBs are charged with chartering career center operators and monitoring their performance, developing high-quality local partnerships to ensure that career centers are meeting the needs of the local communities, and working with the career centers to establish continuous quality improvement mechanisms.

As the first stage in building a statewide system, MassJobs Council decided to select four Regional Employment Boards for participation in first-year implementation of the career center initiative. Additional REBs could apply for planning status and receive smaller grant awards to plan for implementation the following year, or could postpone transition activities altogether. The REBs interested in competing for implementation or planning grants were asked to submit proposals describing their visions for local workforce development systems that would meet the needs of their local communities.

In March 1995, a review committee composed of MassJobs Council members and staff, public agency partners, and representatives from several organizations that were consultants to the state in the development of the One-Stop initiative selected two REBs—the Hampden County and Boston Regional Employment Boards—for immediate implementation of career centers. Two additional regions—Metro North and Berkshire County were also selected to receive first-year implementation grants once specific implementation issues were addressed.

Shortly thereafter, an “implementers’ work group,” which comprised key individuals representing the implementer REBs, the MassJobs Council, the Career Center Office, and partner agency staff was established to work on three important aspects of the selected regional career center initiatives. These included (1) finalizing career center designs that were consistent with state-level requirements and met local-level objectives; (2) developing a process for requests for proposals (RFPs) to select

center operators; and (3) developing a plan for funding first-year center operations.<sup>12</sup> The group met weekly and developed protocols, procedures, and legal documents that would both meet the immediate needs of the first-round implementer REBs and support the career center initiative in the long term.

Consistent with state's vision of supporting local innovation, the procedures developed by the implementer's work group for selecting career center operators was quite flexible. MassJobs Council required only that the REBs' selection processes be consistent with their original proposals and that the REBs ensure that all public and private service providers or coalitions were permitted a fair chance to compete. The MassJobs Council accepted responsibility for developing an integrated funding stream that would enable program funds to be administered by any career center operator or coalition of partners selected by a Regional Employment Board.

The selection processes actually used by the four REBs that participated in first-year implementation funding varied considerably. In some regions, the entire REB was involved in the selection process, while in others a subcommittee was charged with this responsibility. Some REBs required bidders to present their proposals in person, others required only written proposals. Some REBs selected operators that proposed the strongest plans while others suggested that several applicants form partnerships and actively engaged in a negotiation process with prospective center operators. Since the REBs were expected to learn from their own first experiences and the experiences of other REBs in selecting center operators, they are permitted to modify their original selection process in the future.

In theory, once local career center operators are selected, the MassJobs Council will assume a much less active role in the oversight of the local system, while REBs will retain an active role in the ongoing governance of the local system. However, the full implementation of the One-Stop system on a statewide basis has been delayed, due to organized opposition from several quarters, including some state-level administrators and local-level state employee unions. The political controversy has slowed the process of opening career centers, prompted some REBs to abstain from a planned competitive

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<sup>12</sup> One-Stop planners had anticipated that federal block grants would already be in place by this time. When federal block grants failed to materialize, the MassJobs Council and the Career Center Office staff realized that they needed to develop a strategy that would permit the integration of funds to support local career center operations.

RFP process for the coming year, and raised questions about how to accomplish the introduction of competition to public-sector programs without engendering a political backlash.

### **COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION**

Since the implementation of the One-Stop initiative in Massachusetts requires dismantling the pre-existing employment and training system, communication and coordination around the One-Stop initiative at all levels has been highly charged. In the planning stages of the state's efforts to transform its workforce development system, the MassJobs Council and its staff served as the primary coordinating link between the various stakeholders. Initially, MassJobs Council concentrated its efforts on developing partnerships among economic development entities, private-sector employers, and state agencies and departments with responsibility for education and employment and training programs. The Council convened numerous meetings, conferences, and other forums in which strategic planning for a new system of customer-driven workforce development services occurred. The Council also convened the Commissioner's Policy Group of key policymakers representing the state agencies involved in workforce development and coordinated the activities of the seven interagency works groups that were established to support specific aspects of workforce development planning.

Effective communication and coordination among state-level stakeholders during One-Stop implementation emerged as a problem area for the MassJobs Council and the Career Center Office during the first year of implementation. As the state of Massachusetts began to move from the planning to the implementation stages of its career center initiative, the MassJobs Council's mission evolved and its ability to coordinate and maintain productive relationships with other state-level agencies and departments was constrained. Although the interagency work groups raised important questions and identified key implementation issues and challenges, workgroup members were not vested with decision-making authority on these difficult issues. By mid-1995, the decision was made to put the workgroups "on hold" until key decisions about career center implementation had been made. Some workgroup members felt that they had been removed from the process. Another workgroup called the Interagency Integration Committee was active from October 1995 to August 1996. Comprised of high-level staff from the various participating agencies, this group convened to address

some of the issues raised by the other groups around the integrated funding stream. However, it, too, lost momentum. None of the groups has since reconvened.

During the implementation phase, the staff of the state's Career Center Office have emerged as the primary facilitators of communication and coordination between One-Stop stakeholders. The Career Center Office has taken primary responsibility for coordinating (1) horizontal communication between the staff of various state agencies and departments involved in One-Stop initiative, not all of whom are supportive of the initiative; (2) vertical communication between the state and the REBs and between the state and the career centers; and (3) horizontal communication between the REBs, and in some cases, between career centers themselves. By playing an active role, the Career Center Office has provided a buffer between key agency stakeholders who are not in agreement about the career center initiative.

#### **FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS, BUDGETING, AND FISCAL ISSUES**

The \$11.5 million received by Massachusetts as part of its One-Stop Implementation Grant and a related LMI grant has been used as "seed money" to support the operation of the state Career Center Office, develop a statewide information technology system (described below), develop high-quality marketing materials, support capacity-building efforts at the local level, and support the REBs chosen for early implementation in planning, chartering, and overseeing the operation of the state's initial One-Stop career centers.

However, ongoing operation of the One-Stop career center system as envisioned by the state depends on the availability of an integrated funding stream to support center operations. Planners at the state level identify the development of an integrated funding stream as among the most significant challenges the Massachusetts career center initiative has encountered to date. In One-Stop implementation states that have adopted a collaborative approach to restructuring workforce development services, partner agencies typically commit a proportion of their staff and budgets to the One-Stop effort. In Massachusetts, however, the competitive approach demands that partner agencies and departments transfer funds to the MassJobs Council, which then distributes those funds to the career centers to support integrated customer services, with no concurrent transfer of agency staff.

Initially, state planners assumed that federal workforce development block grant legislation would create an integrated funding stream. When block grant legislation

was not passed, Career Center Office staff went directly to the state agencies responsible for workforce development programs and asked them to commit funds to the career center initiative. The framework for an integrated funding stream was constructed around the development of formal Interdepartmental Service Agreements (ISAs). Early in the first year of the Massachusetts implementation grant, the MassJobs Council requested that all of the agencies involved in the One-Stop initiative commit their discretionary funds to the career center initiative. Later that year, agency and department managers were asked to identify additional portions of their budgets that could support career centers.

There was some reluctance on the part of many agencies to commit these funds in the absence of evidence that the career center initiative would be a success. Moreover, agency staff understood that by committing their program dollars and responsibilities to the career center initiative, they were putting their own departments in jeopardy—the more dollars and program functions they transferred to the career centers, the greater the likelihood of their own agencies being downsized and reorganized. For these reasons, negotiating funds transfers demanded considerably more time and effort than planners had anticipated.

Despite these obstacles, the MassJobs Council's Career Center Office succeeded in negotiating agreements with most of the state-level partner agencies, including the Department of Employment and Training, the Department of Education, the Department of Transitional Assistance, the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, and the Commission for the Blind. Formal agreements involving substate grantees were also developed to support funds transfers from the Massachusetts Industrial Services Program (responsible for JTPA Title III) and local JTPA service delivery areas (for Title II) to the local career centers.<sup>13</sup> In FY 96, the total planned partner agency support for the operation of the career centers in the three selected regions totaled approximately \$10 million. However, these funds had not yet been transferred at the time of the site visit, forcing the one-stop staff to rely almost entirely upon grant funds.

A total of \$11 million in agency support has been committed through ISAs for career center operations during FY 97. The largest contributions are from the

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<sup>13</sup> These indirect arrangements were necessary because JTPA Title III funds must, by law, be allocated to substate entities, and because JTPA Title II funds were already committed to local service delivery areas under two-year contracts.

Department of Employment and Training, which is closing its local ES/UI field offices as career centers open (\$5.9 million in FY 97); the Department of Transitional Assistance, which has allocated funds to career centers for job search assistance to welfare clients (\$3.0 million in FY 97); and the Industrial Services Program, which is transferring responsibility for JTPA Title III services to dislocated workers to career centers as well as supporting the delivery of enhanced services to employers (\$1.2 million). To date, only a small amount of JTPA Title II funds have been provided to career centers by local JTPA service delivery areas. Together, these funding commitments will support all but \$1 million of the total \$11.9 million cost of operating the seven functioning career centers during FY 97.

State planners are under tremendous pressure to showcase the results of the career centers in the initial four regions to convince the state legislature and state agency partners that continuing to invest in career centers is an effective way to meet the workforce development needs of state residents. If all goes well for the One-Stop career center system, the political resolve will be found to continue investing in career centers using an integrated funding stream. Over time, integrated funds will not only support all workforce development services in the career centers, but will be used to support the operations of the state Career Center Office (through the charging of an administrative fee against the various funding sources). Planners anticipate that by July 1998, the statewide network of career centers will be self-sustaining through the integrated funding stream.

Although most respondents at the state level indicated that the integrated funding stream was meeting the short-term need for consolidated funding, they are still eager for the introduction of federal block-grants. Planners feel that block grants would facilitate the career center initiative in Massachusetts in three major ways: (1) by transforming the agency-centered budgeting that currently makes it difficult for state agencies to commit resources to a “competing” entity; (2) by eliminating the need for lengthy contract negotiations with the agency responsible for each categorical program; and (3) by eliminating restrictive program-based eligibility and reporting requirements, thereby making it much easier to operate an integrated program that provides universal access.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> When the partner agencies and departments committed funds to the One-Stop initiative on behalf of their categorical programs, some partners expected that the career centers would assume

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE SUPPORT MECHANISMS**

### **Capacity Building and Technical Assistance**

The Career Center Office is responsible for all capacity building efforts required to support the One-Stop initiative. The Office has undertaken capacity-building efforts in three primary areas: (1) providing comprehensive and ongoing technical assistance to the Regional Employment Boards; (2) training career center management staff about categorical programs; and (3) training career center staff about the state's information technology system, including how to use labor market information products and how to prepare for state-level data collection.

In the Spring of 1996, the Career Center Office organized a technical assistance conference for members and staff of the Regional Employment Boards engaged in One-Stop planning or implementation. The conference provided information on specific One-Stop implementation issues and offered the opportunity for the members and staff of the regional boards to meet and interact with one another. The Career Center Office's objective was to establish a process for implementing and monitoring the statewide One-Stop system. During the conference, state staff instructed participants on the criteria the REBs and centers would be required to meet; offered technical assistance in developing legal documents, such as charters; and responded to issues and questions that had emerged for the earliest career centers that had already begun implementation. Career Center Office staff plan to hold a similar conference annually, to address ongoing One-Stop system-building needs and challenges.

In the absence of workforce development block grants, the career centers have been forced to take responsibility for categorical funding streams and have attempted to implement categorical programs in a totally new context. The Career Center Office, with the assistance of the Department of Employment and Training, has organized training sessions around the eligibility and reporting requirements for the different categorical programs. Locally, career center managers have worked with their REBs to develop protocols for implementing these programs in a One-Stop environment. State-level respondents indicated that local career center staff have struggled to adhere

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implementation and reporting requirements identical to the programs formerly represented by these funds. The individual career centers, however, are committed to providing universal access to their customers and feel that program-based recruiting and reporting will seriously hamper their efforts to achieve universal services.

to the legal requirements of categorical programs while attempting to render program boundaries invisible to center customers.

Building staff capacity with respect to the state's information technology system has included two main components: (1) instructing career center staff in navigating the Massachusetts on-line Job Bank and other resources on the Internet, and (2) helping staff prepare to use the state's new data collection infrastructure. Although the staff of most career centers are already adept at manipulating on-line search tools, the Career Center Office provided training in the use of the World Wide Web in an effort to ensure a minimum level of competency in using Internet access and search tools among staff in all of the career centers. The training also provided an opportunity to solicit feedback from career center staff on the quality of state's automated customer information system, and to gather ideas for new links or products that would facilitate service at the local level.

In terms of state-level data collection, the Career Center Office is working with an outside consulting firm, *Synetics*,<sup>15</sup> to develop an information system with the capacity to extract and manipulate data from all of the career centers. Since the centers' internal data tracking systems are not standardized, the Career Center Office and Synetics are working with centers to inform staff of state-level information systems development and to establish interface capability and reporting procedures.

The Career Center Office is committed to creating a coherent workforce development system rather than a loose collection of independently functioning career centers. At the same time, it wants to support local innovation in the design and delivery of customer services. To balance these sometimes conflicting goals, state staff seek to avoid an overly prescriptive training and technical assistance approach and encourage ongoing communication among the members and staff of all of the REBs and career centers.

### **Labor Market Information and Related Information Technology Improvements**

The state has invested heavily in developing automated products that will support the delivery of core services to customers of the individual career centers. All career centers are required to provide customer access to the state's electronic Job Bank that

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<sup>15</sup> Synetics has since changed its name to Synetics/SAIC.

can be accessed through the state's Internet home page. This information system, with links to other state- and federal-level workforce development information and resources, is the one element of the career center system that will be consistent across sites. At the time of the site visit, the state had established electronic links from the One-Stop home page to a variety of other World Wide Web sites, including those of the individual career centers, colleges, universities, other training institutions, institutions offering financial aid, state and federal labor market information sources, state and federal economic data sources, and the statewide Job Bank. The state has supported local sites in establishing links to information about local service providers and employment and training opportunities.

The state is also developing a statewide Talent Bank, an Education and Training Database, and an account management system to track employer use of the career centers.<sup>16</sup> Early versions of these systems can be accessed through the career centers, but the Career Center Office expects to refine them based on customer feedback from the career centers and on-line customer responses. The state is not involved in the development or procurement of self-contained automated products for the delivery of career exploration, resume development, or other core services in the career centers. Rather, center operators are free to select the products most appropriate for their local markets.

### **Management Information Systems (MIS)**

Career centers in Massachusetts are required to collect data to track center usage and inform their own continuous improvement efforts. These data are generally similar or identical to those required by the state to track system-level effectiveness, but are generated in a form that meets local needs rather than state requirements. Since the Career Center Office understands the career centers to be *its* customers rather than the reverse, the state has accepted responsibility for creating an architecture that will extract, manipulate, and store data, and an interface that will facilitate communication between the state system and each of the local systems. Each center is responsible for collecting a standard set of data on all individual customers and may select its own software for this purpose. The state system will then upload this information into its

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<sup>16</sup> *FutureWorks*, one of the career centers chartered by the Hampden County Regional Employment Board, purchased a similar system of its own and has continued to use it; other career centers use the system developed by the state. As new career centers open, they will be given the option of using the state system or developing their own.

data management system so that it can be shared with participating agencies at the state level.<sup>17</sup> The Career Center Office envisions this system backbone being built according to a model of “just-in-time” data collection. This state-level architecture will eventually support career centers by eliminating the majority of their state-level reporting requirements, enabling them to focus on delivering services to customers.

The Career Center Office recognizes that the Regional Employment Boards also require electronic linkages to the career centers and the state Career Center Office. A \$2.7 million information technology (IT) bond measure has been introduced into the state legislature. The Career Center Office expects that it will pass and plans to commit a portion of these funds to developing electronic linkages between and among the centers, the REBs, and the Career Center Office. The remainder of the funds will be used to purchase several network servers to support further development of the statewide data extraction and reporting system.

### **Marketing**

The Career Center Office’s marketing efforts have been carried out in consultation with a marketing advisory board composed of several individuals and groups of consultants involved in different aspects of marketing. The state has invested heavily in market research to identify customer needs as they have changed over time and by region. This research included telephone interviews with 200 owners or personnel managers of Massachusetts businesses, focus groups with employer and individuals customers, and a survey of employers. Informal feedback from the REBs, all of which have significant private-sector representation, has also been taken into consideration.

The research findings about customer needs and preferences have informed every stage of the development, implementation, and marketing of the One-Stop initiative. In fact, the MassJobs Council began marketing its One-Stop vision before implementation by publicly identifying the need for a new system and describing the features that its customers were demanding. Employers and job-seekers contacted during marketing research expressed frustration about their previous experiences with the public sector employment system, but agreed that if the state invested in a “totally new system,”

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<sup>17</sup> The state has faced a challenge in developing an interface that will permit data to be shared between its client/server network and the mainframe computers that store data in some of the participating agencies and departments.

they would give it a try *once*. The MassJobs Council and Career Center Office have used these findings to market the initiative within state government. If the process of implementing the career center system slows because of state-government indecision, MassJobs Council fears that customers will reject the system as “totally new,” and fail to make use of it.

Early on, the job of the marketing staff of the Career Center Office entailed managing the marketing that was already occurring through direct media coverage and subsequent coverage of political challenges to the entire One-Stop initiative. When the One-Stop grant was awarded, it generated significant and ongoing media coverage both of the grant and the system transformation the grant was supporting. Respondents at the state level expressed ambivalence about this attention: on the one hand, the media coverage generated interest in, and business for, the One-Stop centers; on the other hand, the public scrutiny served to politicize the entire change process. In Massachusetts, the career center initiative has established a considerable public presence and created political controversy. As a result, the Career Center Office and the career centers feel tremendous pressure to demonstrate that the career centers are effective.

As more career centers opened, and existing career centers began to conduct high volumes of business, the Career Center Office recognized the need to develop marketing materials that would bring more employers (and more *diverse* employers) into the career centers. The Career Center Office is working on a 25-page brochure designed for this purpose. The brochure will be available in the local career centers, along with local marketing materials. The Career Center Office has also developed a One-Stop logo, to be featured prominently in all of the career centers (although each center may also have its own logo). The logo does not represent the MassJobs Council or any other state agency or department. Rather, it is intended to represent the One-Stop initiative itself.

In Massachusetts, the key to marketing the career center initiative lies in the ability of the REBs to coordinate with the individual centers in attracting new business. The Career Center Office, therefore, encourages and promotes local marketing efforts and stands ready to assist career centers in developing and carrying out their local marketing plans.

## **ASSESSMENT AND LESSONS LEARNED**

Massachusetts planners had originally anticipated completing statewide implementation of career centers in all sixteen regions within the three-year implementation grant period. However, several members of the state legislature were concerned that the old system would be dismantled before there was evidence that the new system was effective. Under the threat of reversing One-Stop implementation, the MassJobs Council worked out a compromise with the Lt. Governor, the legislature, and the REBs whereby the roll-out schedule would be extended and performance data collected to inform the initiative's continued progress.

During the second year of the implementation grant, a total of seven career centers became operational across three of the four initially selected regions. An additional ten regions continued to plan for career centers, and the state continued to develop the technology-based backbone for core services including job banks, talent banks, an education and training database, labor market information databases, customer satisfaction databases and feedback mechanisms, and direct links for employer access.

Massachusetts has taken a bold and comprehensive approach to reinventing its public employment and training services and delivery systems. It is the only state to have adopted a thoroughly competitive approach to the provision of workforce development services; it is also the only state that is simultaneously constructing an entirely new statewide system of workforce development centers and dismantling its old employment and training system. The fact that no existing state agency is playing a lead role in One-Stop implementation, the emphasis on regionally-determined delivery systems and service designs, and the central role of market forces in system design and implementation also distinguish the Massachusetts One-Stop approach from that of other states.

The MassJobs Council and Career Center Office have faced numerous challenges in implementing the state's competitive approach to workforce development. Among the issues that continue to impact the state's progress in supporting the emerging statewide network of One-Stop career centers are the following: (1) maintaining a balance between providing clear leadership to support One-Stop system development through the Career Center Office and generating consensus among a variety of state-level stakeholders; (2) improving state-level resource allocation mechanisms and strategies; and (3) balancing state policy guidance on systemic One-Stop issues with

encouragement of local autonomy in developing a system that is “state-guided and locally-driven.” Each of these issues is addressed briefly below.

At the state level, the MassJobs Council and the Career Center Office face the challenge of providing strong leadership on the One-Stop initiative while maintaining quality relationships with partner state agencies and departments. This has been a formidable challenge in Massachusetts. Unlike states whose local One-Stop initiatives have been accompanied by a reorganization of state workforce development agencies to consolidate leadership of the One-Stop system within existing state agencies, Massachusetts has charged a separate entity, the MassJobs Council, with primary responsibility for the planning and administration of the One-Stop system. Although joint planning and decision-making between MassJobs Council and the partner state agencies has been a feature of One-Stop implementation in Massachusetts, the MassJobs Council Career Center Office has found it difficult to simultaneously provide clear leadership on the career center initiative and engage in collective decision-making with the state-level staff of programs whose program funds will ultimately support the new career center system.

Another challenge for the Career Center Office has been its charge to develop a mechanism to transfer of funds from various state agencies and departments to support the One-Stop initiative. Although Interdepartmental Services Agreements provide a short-term solution to this problem, their negotiation has absorbed considerable CCO staff time and caused confusion among the REBs and career center staff about what responsibilities they have to follow the regulations and reporting requirements that accompany dollars transferred to the career centers from the various categorical programs. The fact that the JTPA Title II system has not yet provided career centers with substantial funding support has made the funding issues even more difficult.

Although each career center is encouraged to develop innovative services and delivery mechanisms, the state also seeks to establish some level of consistency among the centers so that they will be recognized as parts of a single statewide system. The Career Center Office seeks to support local innovation, but is also concerned to demonstrate the effectiveness of the system as a whole to the world at large. Staff have found it difficult to strike a balance between encouraging local autonomy and providing guidance to support the common systemic elements of the career center initiative.

In spite of these challenges, the One-Stop initiative in Massachusetts has met with much success. Among the key innovations that have resulted from the One-Stop implementation process are the following: (1) the development of new partnerships among private and public sector organizations; (2) significant private sector support and involvement in planning and developing the new Massachusetts career center system; and (3) the introduction of multiple levels of competition to the process of selecting and maintaining career center operators.

The open bidding process has brought together coalitions of diverse organizations to operate career centers, including consortia of private firms and community-based organizations. The combined capacity of these different types of organizations to reach different sectors of the employer and job seeker communities has increased dramatically under the Massachusetts model of cooperation and coordination within a competitive framework.<sup>18</sup>

The private sector has been significantly involved in all aspects of planning and implementing the Massachusetts career center initiative. One-Stop planners recognized early on that employer support was needed to sustain the public employment system in any form, and was absolutely crucial to reforming it. Employers were consulted in market research and their feedback was incorporated into the new system design. Employers have also played key roles in every stage of implementation. Career Center Office staff indicated that if employer support had not been so strong and consistent, the entire career center initiative would have been threatened.

Finally, Massachusetts has introduced competition to the public sector in significant and comprehensive ways. Although many states have introduced a limited amount of competition to their employment and training programs, such as competition to select service providers for key functions, Massachusetts has opened the entire system to competition in an effort to ensure that all aspects of the system are performance-driven.

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<sup>18</sup> For example, in the Hampden County Region, one of the selected career center operators is a consortium including the local Department of Employment and Training, the Department of Transitional Assistance, the local Chamber of Commerce, the local community college, and the Donahue Institute at the University of Massachusetts. In the Boston Region, Drake Beam Morin, a private-sector outplacement firm, partnered with the local Department of Employment and Training to operate a career center.

Because of the dramatic change that the career center system will bring about, key legislators, social service providers, and welfare agencies are approaching this system transformation with apprehension. Only sustained and meaningful communication among all partners will make it possible to address the fundamental challenges posed by Massachusetts' One-Stop approach thoughtfully, with determination, and with good will. These qualities will be necessary, as well, in order to identify the lessons learned from the Massachusetts experience to inform system changes underway in other states.