

# THE STATE OF WORKPLACE EDUCATION IN THE STATES

## *MASSACHUSETTS*

### **Funding**

- For the past two years, Massachusetts' workplace education has been almost wholly state-funded; however, a distinction is not generally made between Federal and state funds.
- \$.75-1M is dedicated to a traditional workplace education program.
- \$1M is dedicated to the Basic Education and Employment Skills Training (BEST) Initiative.
- \$2.7M of incentive grants money under WIA is dedicated to the BEST Older Youth program.
- Additionally, employers contribute both through targeted funding and in-kind donations.
- Grants are given for three to five years. Employers make targeted contributions through a tiered structure by which companies should be paying all costs after this time.
- Employers make in-kind donations in the form of paid release time, time from supervisors, and space.

### **Current Initiatives**

Massachusetts' traditional workplace education program (\$.75-1M) was designed to leverage long-term investments. It partners with employers and unions, giving three to five year grants to mid-sized and small businesses, respectively. After this period of time, the employers are typically paying all costs of maintaining the workplace education program. This is achieved by a tiered payment structure; wherein, for example, the employer would pay 20-25% of costs in Year 2, 40-50% of costs in Year 3 and so forth. Two-thirds of workplaces from 1985 to the present have continued these programs independently. To apply for these grants, the employer must actually drive the application process, but the grant goes to the educational partner. Participating employers have fallen largely in the manufacturing (plastics, metals), health care (hospitals, nursing homes), and service industries. Educational partners have traditionally been community colleges, community-based organizations, and school districts.

The Basic Education and Employment Skills Training (BEST) Initiative (\$1M) has been created in collaboration with WIA Title I Agency. It tends to have an industry sector focus in order to build capacity in that part of state. Applications for this program come in from Local Workforce Investment Boards (LWIBs).

The BEST Older Youth (\$2.7M) program utilizes incentive grant money under WIA. It is targeted at people moving from school to work, requiring education and training providers to bridge a gap.

### **Barriers to Workplace Education**

- From 1985 to 1992, Massachusetts employed external evaluators to determine what does and does not work in adult education and have, subsequently, experienced few barriers.
- Nonetheless, a few barriers do exist:
  - At times, businesses file for bankruptcy while running the project (although the state has often been able to continue services using dislocated worker funds).
  - Investment in workplace education should be characterized by a counter cyclical nature. When the economy is strong and workplace is very busy, release time is difficult to facilitate. Workplace education should, therefore, be especially utilized during downturns in the economy; however, tax dollars are not as readily available during those times.
  - Institutionalization of programs after the grant expires, especially during economic downturns, does not occur frequently enough. Since 1985, Massachusetts has achieved an employer and/or union institutionalization rate of about two-thirds. Sometimes the institutionalization of the program is too "watered down" to continue its effectiveness.
  - Barriers can arise when employers realize the level of commitment that workplace education necessitates.

### **Location of programs**

- 90% of workplace education programs are offered on-site, with the remaining taking place at union halls.

### **Responsibility for implementation at the local level**

- Community colleges
- LEA's
- Employers
- Unions
- School districts
- Community based organizations

### **Support Services**

- Training
- Funding to providers for curriculum development
- Marketing
- Partnership Building
- Policies and support for one-stops

### **One-Stop Connections**

- Adult workplace education initiatives in Massachusetts are connected to One-Stops but only loosely, as One-Stop services are primarily concerned with getting workers new jobs; whereas, workplace education initiatives are programs that traditionally deal with incumbent employees.

### Workplace Education Program Qualities

State	State Partners	Enrollment	State Staff	State Led Effort
Massachusetts	Industry Associations & the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Commonwealth Corporation & the Division of Employment and Training, and the LWIB Association	6%, 1449 workers	Full-time	Yes

*This information was compiled from conversations with staff of the Adult and Community Learning Services of the Massachusetts State Department of Education, and from statements posted on the websites, <http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/>, <http://www.mcae.net/>, and <http://www.sabes.org/>.*