

FACT SHEET

Libraries for Job Seekers Mini-Grant

BACKGROUND

Libraries have always provided resources for career development and job information. As the methods of finding and applying for a job have significantly gravitated to the use of the Internet for job seekers, the library provision of free Internet services and computers is seen as an increasingly valued service by its users. Almost every public library in the Commonwealth provides computers and free Internet access, with the library usually being the only place in the community to provide access at no charge. Additionally, many libraries offer Wi-Fi access as well, welcoming patrons to use their own computers to access the Internet from the library, both inside and out!

Library staffs already skilled at helping patrons learn how to use computers to search electronic collections are now being recruited to teach job seekers with no previous computer experience how to research, find jobs and government assistance, create and post resumes, and set up email accounts. They teach patrons how to use electronic resources offering everything from full-text articles to GED materials, and citizenship and professional exam preparation testing can support educational, business and training needs.

The current economic downturn has seen some people returning to the library for the first time in years, and people new to libraries eager to be introduced to their resources and find help. Many come with low technology and literacy skills, as well as being speakers of English as a second language. The library, often in partnership with local community agencies and other governmental departments can work together to meet the needs of their constituents to help them prepare for and find, apply and interview for jobs.

MASSACHUSETTS LONG-RANGE PLAN GOAL

Goal 3: All Massachusetts residents will be better prepared to meet life's challenges at school, in the workplace, and in their daily lives through access to programs and training that foster their development of information literacy skills and communication technology skills.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

This program will allow public libraries to receive up to \$7500 in grant funds to carry out a program aimed at serving the needs of job and career seekers in their communities. As part of the grant program, libraries will be expected to:

- Provide staff training to be knowledgeable in using the website of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development
<http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=elwdhomepage&L=1&L0=Home&sid=Elwd>
- Develop an advisory group including members of governmental and civic and community groups and institutions of higher education as appropriate, and members of the target audience.
- Develop web space geared for job and career seekers, providing resources and links for career information including, but not limited to online reference assistance for job seekers (can link to Massanswers.org or similar projects), full-text electronic resources, career planning, resumes, job directories, networking group, workshops, job fairs, local, regional and statewide agencies providing career counseling, job search instruction, placement and training, legal and financial assistance, special services to people with disabilities and veterans, etc. Examples:

Newton Free Library <http://www.newtonfreelibrary.net/?sec=services&doc=career>
Cuyahoga Library <http://www.cuyahogalibrary.org/careerexpert.aspx>

- Develop multimedia collections, including online exam preparation resources (as funding permits).
- Develop workshops to meet the needs of the target audience, including computer training, resume preparation, interviewing, networking, etc. Target audiences may be all types of job seekers; those relating to a specific workforce trend, e.g., nursing; or to a specific group of job seekers, e.g., teens gaining work-related skills. May plan, or be a presence at a career day where job seekers can meet with potential employers and local service agencies.

A portion of grant funds may be used to pay for extra hours to increase and train staffing who would be responsible for programming and/or to hire part-time staff to carry out the program.

Collaboration with governmental and local civic and community partners must be demonstrated.

Projects will each be funded up to \$7500 under this competitive grant program.

ELIGIBILITY

Any public library that meets standard eligibility requirements for Direct Grant programs is eligible to apply. Public libraries must:

- Have identified a need to serve job and career seekers in their MBLC approved long-range and annual action plan

INTERESTED?

Applicants must submit a **Letter of Intent** form with “Libraries for Job Seekers” option checked off under **TYPE**. For additional information about this program, please contact Marlene Heroux at the MBLC at 800-952-7403, ext. 250 or by e-mail at marlene.heroux@state.ma.us.