May 7, 2014

Dear Applicant:

On behalf of the Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS) unit of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE), I want to thank you for your interest in providing professional development services to the Commonwealth's Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs and practitioners.

The 2010 strategic framework entitled *Facing the Future: The Massachusetts Strategic Framework for Adult Basic Education* guides the state's response to the needs of undereducated and limited English proficient adults in the context of three major public policy goals - the Commonwealth's education goals, its economic and workforce development goals, and its goals for civic engagement and community strength. Within the context of these public policy goals, the three goals for the ABE system outlined in *Facing the Future* are as follows:

1. Ensure that adults needing basic education have access to services;
2. Increase system effectiveness and quality of the ABE system; and,
3. Prepare students for success in their next steps: in college and further training, at work, and in the community.

The priorities of the *Adult Basic Education Professional Development System* grant program directly address the second and third goals, that is, increasing the ABE system’s effectiveness at preparing adult students for success in their next steps.

The current educational needs of Massachusetts’ undereducated and limited English proficient adults demand a much higher level of academic rigor and support than has heretofore been required. This reality is based on several factors including labor market and technology developments, new content standards, and a new high school equivalency test. Thus today’s ABE practitioners and programs need access to professional development that is relevant, comprehensive, and responsive to the demand for increased academic rigor and support.

Consequently, today’s ABE system needs a professional development system that can provide deep expertise in academic instructional areas, can support other key areas of programming such as strong educational leadership and education and career planning, and can assist ABE practitioners and programs in positively impacting adult students’ learning and progress towards their next steps.

Accordingly, this grant program will fund a coordinated and cohesive system of statewide professional development providers, each with the requisite expertise in one or more priority professional development areas, to deliver research-based, high quality and effective professional development and support to ABE practitioners and programs across the Commonwealth.

ESE will also hire one or more contractors, procured through COMMBUYYS, to provide supplemental services related to coordinating the ABE statewide professional development system and maintaining a system-wide professional development communication network.
Support for this grant program underscores ESE’s commitment to the provision of ongoing, high quality, research-based professional and organizational development, as a key strategy for achieving the ABE system’s strategic goals. A response to this Request for Proposals (RFP) must address the priorities of the Adult Basic Education Professional Development System grant program (Fund Code 667/343) outlined in this RFP.

Sincerely,

Jolanta Conway
Acting State ABE Director