

Questions and Answers on the Competitive Request for Proposals

Adult Career Pathways – Fund Codes 540 and 541

Updated: **February 16, 2012**

This document will be updated at least weekly, and more frequently when possible, with additional questions and answers as they come in. Applicants are advised to check for new material each time the ACLS Hot Topics section indicates that an updated version has been posted. **Each time the document is updated, changes since the last posting will be noted in red font.**

All page references refer to the bound hard copy of the RFPs that was distributed at bidders' conferences. For applicants referring to the RFP posted to the website, section references are also included.

1. CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS TO THE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

- Please note clarifications/corrections to the regional priorities for Hampden County and Merrimack Valley, in Section 6 below. The revised language in Section 6 replaces the language in the RFP.
- Date Due: Friday, February 24, 2012
- NOTE: Proposals must be delivered to the Department by 5:00 p.m. (changed from 3 p.m.) on the date due.
- Responses to Part III Required Program Information may be single spaced.
- Information that is submitted but not required will not be read. No letters of support will be read. No additional appendices will be read.

2. GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ADULT CAREER PATHWAYS GRANT PROGRAM

Q. In applying for Adult Career Pathways funding, is it necessary to complete a Teaching Qualification Form?

A. No.

Q. May applicants communicate directly with the WIB?

A. No. In order to ensure that all applicants have access to the same information, communication must be restricted to use of the Q&A on the ESE website, using the mailbox provided in the Adult Career Pathways RFP under Contact Information. If needed, ACLS staff will consult with WIB staff before posting a response to the question.

Q. Who are our workforce partners? How can I find out which workforce region I am in?

A. Go to the website of the Massachusetts Workforce Board Association at www.massworkforce.com and click on the link to the "WIB Regions Map" map at

the top left hand side of the page. Click on any region for more information, including a list of cities and towns in that region. The link to the list of cities and towns is on the right hand side of each regional page.

Q. How do I apply if I serve sites in different workforce regions, and students come from different workforce regions?

A. If an applicant wants to apply for funding to serve the identified need in more than one workforce area, the applicant needs to submit applications for each region (provided the applicant has also applied for Community Adult Learning Center grants in those regions). If an applicant wants to serve one region only, then apply to the region in which the program site is located. Receipt of an Adult Career Pathways grant is contingent upon the approval of the applicant's Community Adult Learning Center grant award in the same workforce region.

Q. Are there guidelines that accompany the Adult Career Pathways RFP?

A. There are no guidelines for the Adult Career Pathways grant program beyond the guidance provided in the RFP. The Adult Career Pathways grant recipients will be expected to adhere to the rate-based staff salaries, but are not subject to the other formulas outlined in the ABE Guidelines and the SMARTT reference documents. For example, the percentage of time that Community Adult Learning Centers are required to assign to Educational and Career Advising, staff development, etc., does not apply to the Adult Career Pathways grant program.

Q. Which fund code should be used, 540 or 541?

A. Applicants should reference both fund codes; ACLS will assign the fund code at a later time, based on whether the grant is comprised of state or federal funding.

Q. Do the need points apply to the community selected by the program in this RFP?

A. No.

Q. Will students enrolled in Adult Career Pathways have to be assessed?

A. Yes, Adult Career Pathways programs will be subject to ACLS assessment policies.

3. TABLE 1 FUNDING ALLOCATION CHART

Q. The amount for the Central Mass workforce region is \$216,000; is that the total available to the field or is a percentage retained by the WIB/OSCC?

A: \$216,000 is allocated for Adult Career Pathways in the workforce region; the amount available for programming is \$216,000 minus 10% that will be directed toward administrative costs for the LWIB (and is the case for all workforce regions).

Q. Regarding Table 1, do the amounts include the 10% to the LWIBs for administration and thus lower the amount for direct services?

A. Yes.

4. LETTER OF INTENT TO APPLY

Q. Do applicants need to submit a separate Letter of Intent to apply for an Adult Career Pathways grant?

A. No, there is one Letter of Intent to apply form for all grant programs. Applicants check off which grant program or programs they intend to apply for.

Q: Is the Letter of Intent available in an editable format that can be filled out electronically, or do you expect it to be typed on a typewriter or hand-written?

A: The Letter of Intent cannot be filled out electronically; it must be printed out and filled in. Either typed or handwritten Letters of Intent are acceptable. Send a hard copy to the address indicated in the RFP.

Q. May the Letter of Intent be hand-delivered?

A. Yes.

5. PURPOSE

Q. How will the TABE ClasE show progress/learner gain in career readiness? Is the primary focus English literacy with topics covering career readiness or is it a class to actually prepare students for the workforce? Is computer literacy considered skills training?

A. The eligibility requirements for Career Pathways students are the same eligibility requirements as for students enrolled in the CALC programs. State approved valid and reliable assessments will be required to measure student learning gains in Career Pathways programs. The TABE ClasE is one of the approved assessments. In addition to the required assessments, applicants may propose to use other assessments to measure career readiness. Computer literacy taught separately from instruction is considered skills training. Computer literacy integrated in the basic skills instruction is an allowable activity under Career Pathways grants.

Q. Is the goal of Adult Career Pathways that people will get GEDs and jobs?

A. There is more than one priority goal. The purpose and priorities of the Adult Career Pathways grant program are as specified in the RFP.

6. REGIONAL PRIORITIES

1) BERKSHIRE

2) BOSTON

Q: Can students for Adult Career Pathways be recruited citywide, or only from our own GED program?

A: Students can be recruited citywide.

Q. The Boston priority references GED intensive, fast-track, and GED Plus program models. Does this include all ASE level programs, specifically the ADP (Adult Diploma Program)?

A. No. Adult Diploma Programs are not included as options under Career Pathways.

Q. Will ESE continue to fund Boston's Assessor's hours for the ADP? If so, under which fund code?

A. This is a question related to the Community Adult Learning Centers RFP (rather than the Adult Career Pathways RFP), and it will be answered in both places. Adult Diploma portfolio assessment will not be an allowable expense under the Adult Career Pathways RFP. Under the Community Adult Learning Centers grant program (Fund Codes 340/345/359), the Department will consider funding a portion of an assessor, proportional to the number of ESE-funded adult students who submit portfolios for review.

3) BRISTOL COUNTY

Q. Table 1 shows \$194,000 available for Adult Career Pathways programming in Bristol County. Should that funding be used to serve the three major population areas of the county (Fall River, Taunton, and Attleboro), or focus on one population area?

A. The priority does not identify any specific areas of the region for service. Applications will not necessarily be more competitive if they identify multiple communities as opposed to a single part of region. All program designs will be reviewed and evaluated against the criteria in the Adult Career Pathways RFP.

Q. Could Adult Career Pathways classes be intensive classes of short duration offered serially, one after another?

A. In Bristol County, classes offered in specific cycles are not desired, but open entry/open exit program designs in which students may enter at any time are preferred. In all regions, proposals should demonstrate sufficient intensity and duration of service so that students can achieve their goals.

Q. Is open enrollment/open exit the expectation, or shorter cycles of managed enrollment?

A. In Bristol County, open enrollment/open exit is preferred.

4) BROCKTON AREA

Q. Is open enrollment/open exit the expectation, or shorter cycles of managed enrollment?

A. We will consider all program designs in the Brockton region. In all regions, proposals should demonstrate sufficient intensity and duration of service so that students can achieve their goals.

5) CAPE AND ISLANDS

Q. The priorities for Cape Cod and the Islands involve an overview of industry sectors – does that mean all sectors, or can the applicant pick and choose?

A. Applicants should concentrate on the industry sectors identified in labor market documents on the region's website at <http://ciwib.org/>.

6) FRANKLIN/HAMPSHIRE

7) **HAMPDEN COUNTY**

CORRECTION TO REGIONAL PRIORITY – THE LANGUAGE BELOW REPLACES THE LANGUAGE IN THE RFP:

Design may include either Intensive ESOL (SPL 4 and above) and/or ABE (GLE 9-12) for 20+ hours per week. Computer and math instruction must be incorporated into both the ESOL and the ABE curriculum. Program design must include case management or counseling that addresses employment and career goals and exploration of post-secondary education and training options, including introduction to local educational and career resources such as training programs and educational institutions.

All curricula must be contextualized for college and career awareness. Priority industry sectors include health care, precision manufacturing, green jobs, and/or early childhood education. Applicants are not limited to the priority industry sectors.

8) **MERRIMACK VALLEY**

CORRECTION TO REGIONAL PRIORITY – THE LANGUAGE BELOW REPLACES THE LANGUAGE IN THE RFP:

Intensive jobs-related instruction (10-20 hours per week) through ESOL SPL 4 and above, and/or Pre-GED and GED classes. Curriculum should be contextualized where possible to promote work and career readiness and awareness, particularly in the MVWIB priority sectors of health careers, advanced manufacturing, green jobs and STEM-related job opportunities.

9) **METRO NORTH**

10) **METRO SOUTH/WEST**

Q. Is there a required number of participants for the Metro Southwest Health Care Learning Network?

A. No. This is a pilot program to test the Health Care Learning Network (HCLN) in an adult community learning center setting.

Q. Must HLCN students be current Community Adult Learning Center students or can they be new “recruits?”

A. The Adult Career Pathways grant program does not require that students be current Community Adult Learning Center students; refer to the RFP under Fund Use for student eligibility.

Q. Can a consortium of Community Adult Learning Center applicants apply to be Health Care Learning Network partners under the Adult Career Pathways grant for Metro Southwest?

A. Yes, in fact it is encouraged.

Q. What is the required outcome of Metro Southwest’s Health Care Learning Network?

A. The goal is to enroll people in community college to pursue a health care related program of study. ACLS will negotiate outcomes with funded programs.

Q. Where might I get additional information about HCLN?

A. Go to the *Partnerships for a Skilled Workforce* website at www.pswinc.org and click on Healthcare Works. There is a link to the Health Care Learning Network.

11) GREATER NEW BEDFORD

Q. The priority references curriculum contextualized to industry sectors, but the sectors are not identified for Greater New Bedford as they are in the other regions.

A. The sectors in the Greater New Bedford region are health care and advanced manufacturing.

Q. Is open enrollment/open exit the expectation, or shorter cycles of managed enrollment?

A. In Greater New Bedford, open enrollment/open exit is preferred. In all regions, proposals should demonstrate sufficient intensity and duration of service so that students can achieve their goals.

12) NORTH SHORE

Q. Is there a preference in the North Shore region for a part-time or full-time program?

A. All program designs that meet the local priorities will be considered.

13) GREATER LOWELL

14) NORTH CENTRAL

15) SOUTH SHORE

Q. The priorities for the South Shore include intensive instruction in GED or ESOL, but indicate that the program design must include math/algebra. Is that just for GED?

A. Yes.

Q. Providing very intensive instruction would be new for a small program such as ours; we don't know if we can get the target population to commit to that much time. Should we even apply, since we are not sure?

A. Application submissions should be developed based on local workforce board priorities and the applicant's ability to serve a population needing and eligible for the services. There is information available about community demographics and need that should guide applicants' decisions.

Q. Is there a minimum requirement of the number of students for classes in Adult Career Pathways?

A. Class size is not defined in the RFP; however, applicants are advised to propose cost effective program designs.

Q. Could Adult Career Pathways classes be intensive classes of short duration offered serially, one after another?

A. Yes, in the South Shore region. In all regions, proposals should demonstrate sufficient intensity and duration of service so that students can achieve their goals.

16) CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS

Q. Can programs serve a higher level of ESOL learners?

A. A learner may not enter with a Student Performance Level (SPL) level higher than 6, but can exit at a higher level within that program year.

Q. Is the RFP asking for outcomes?

A. Outcomes will be negotiated with funded applicants during funding negotiations.

7. ELIGIBILITY

Q. Can students for Adult Career Pathways be recruited citywide, or only from our own GED program?

A. Students can be recruited citywide.

Q. If the high school drop-out age is raised to 18, will program eligibility change?

A. If an initiative to raise the drop-out rate to 18 passes in the state legislature, ESE's legal department will provide ACLS with guidance.

Q. Do we have to apply for a Community Adult Learning Center grant in order to apply for career pathways?

A. Yes. Receipt of an Adult Career Pathways grant is contingent upon the approval of the applicant's Community Adult Learning Center grant award in the same workforce region.

8. FUNDING

Q. Does the funding for Adult Career Pathways replace what was formally known as the "indirect" funds for Community Adult Learning Centers?

A. Yes.

Q. Are Career Pathways designs compatible with Section 30 program requirements?

A. ACLS' Adult Career Pathways RFP was not intentionally developed to meet requirements of any other state funded programs or funding streams.

9. FUND USE

Q. When a student is being accepted into a Career Pathways program, is there any limit as to how long they were involved in a DESE-funded program?

A. Prior CALC enrollment is not an eligibility requirement for enrollment in Adult Career Pathways. Eligible students for the Adult Career Pathways are individuals who: have attained 16 years of age, and are not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under state law, and who either:

- lack sufficient mastery of basic educational skills to enable the individuals to function effectively in society,
- do not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and have not achieved an equivalent level of education, or
- are unable to speak, read, or write the English language.

Q. Is it true that no one with a GED or diploma is eligible for participation in the Adult Career Pathways Program?

A. Please refer to the student eligibility criteria in the response to the question above.

Q. Can students for Adult Career Pathways be recruited citywide, or only from our own GED program?

A. Students can be recruited citywide.

Q. If the Community Adult Learning Center application includes a request for funds to support student transportation, may the agency request student transportation in the Adult Career Pathways application?

A. Yes.

Q. Could a student be enrolled in Adult Career Pathways, not achieve a GED, and then go back to the Community Adult Learning Center?

A. Yes.

Q. If the high school drop-out age is raised to 18, will program eligibility change?

A. If an initiative to raise the drop-out rate to 18 passes in the state legislature, ESE's legal department will provide ACLS with guidance.

Q. Is the student eligibility for Adult Career Pathways is the same as ABE eligibility?

A. Yes, the Adult Career Pathways Programs are funded with adult basic education funding. Adult Career Pathways programs must serve adults who are eligible for adult basic education services. Eligible students are individuals who: have attained 16 years of age, and are not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under state law, and who either:

- lack sufficient mastery of basic educational skills to enable the individuals to function effectively in society,
- do not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and have not achieved an equivalent level of education, or
- are unable to speak, read, or write the English language.

Q. The eligible students, as described on p. 97 of the RFP imply a focus on lowest level of ESOL. Is this correct? (Editor's note: The language referenced in this question, in the Fund Use section of the RFP template, is copied above in response to the previous question.)

A. They are eligible, but they are not the only students eligible.

Q. Could Adult Career Pathways serve the same students, though, for example, GED graduates who continue on for Adult Career Pathways services?

- A. Students enrolled in either program (CALC or Adult Career Pathways) need to meet the eligibility requirements for adult basic education. GED graduates are unlikely to lack the skills expected of a high school graduate, and therefore are unlikely to be eligible.
- Q. If GED graduates are unlikely to be eligible for Adult Career Pathways services, then would any next steps work we do need to be done while the student is enrolled under Community Adult Learning Center funding?*
- A. Eligible applicants could include students currently enrolled in the Community Adult Learning Center who have career-related goals, or adults who meet the eligibility requirements could be recruited directly into the Adult Career Pathways program. Preparing students to be successful in their next steps is not limited to the Adult Career Pathways grant program; it is a key focus area for the ABE system in Massachusetts as a whole, as explained in *Facing the Future: Massachusetts Strategic Framework for Adult Basic Education* (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/sp/>).
- Q. Do the students enrolled in Adult Career Pathways need to be the same students enrolled in the Community Adult Learning Center, or a new cadre of students for this particular class?*
- A. Adult and Community Learning Services anticipates that the program would identify its target population and recruit participants accordingly. The target population may be recruited from students enrolled in the Community Adult Learning Center, or a new cadre of students, or a combination of the above.
- Q. Could students be co-enrolled in the Community Adult Learning Center and Adult Career Pathways?*
- A. It's possible that a small number of students could be co-enrolled. Applicants proposing co-enrollment should provide a rationale.
- Q. Can funds be used to provide skills training?*
- A. No. Allowable activities are those described in sections 203 and 231(b) of the *Adult and Family Literacy Act, (AEFLA)*, referenced as Title II of the *Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998*. Specifically, such activities include services or instruction below the postsecondary level, including adult education and literacy services, workplace literacy services, family literacy services, and or English literacy programs. Adult education funds may not be used to support occupational training.
- Q. Can support services be built in? Is childcare an allowable cost?*
- A. Yes.

10. PROJECT DURATION

- Q. Is the proposal and budget request for one year or two?*
- A. The proposal is for two years; the budget is for the first year.*

- Q. Why is the project duration 2 years, and not 5 years like the Community Adult Learning Center grant?*
- A. The project duration is shorter in order to adjust for potential changes in labor market needs and demands. The intent of the Department is to release another competitive Request for Proposals for Adult Career Pathways when these grants end, with revised priorities based on labor market demands at that time.

Part III Required Program Information

11. PROGRAM DESIGN

- Q. Can a proposed Adult Career Pathways program augment our current program with more career related activities and individual counseling, or does the new funding have to be a free-standing program with an entirely different group of students?*
- A. Adult Career Pathways is separate and distinct from other grant programs. Students enrolled in other programs may or may not be more suited for Adult Career Pathways based on their preferences, interests, and/or scheduling needs.
- Q. How can I show my program design without a class plan (Program Design, Question #4)?*
- A. See the optional Adult Career Pathways Class Schedule form, posted on the ACLS RFP page (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/rfp/>), which may be completed and submitted with the application to assist in responding to Program Design, Question #4.
- Q. Is Part III of the Adult Career Pathways RFP the required narrative to identify the program design being proposed? Are other narrative responses required?*
- A. Program design for Adult Career Pathways is addressed in question #4 of Part III Required Program Information. No other narrative is required. Applicants may choose to complete the optional Adult Career Pathways Class Schedule form, posted on the ACLS RFP page (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/rfp/>), to assist in responding to Program Design, Question #4.
- Q. If summer programming is involved, will the expected start date be July 1, 2012, or can summer programming begin July 1, 2013?*
- A. The start dates of Adult Career Pathways Programs may vary. Refer to SMARTT Technical Manual for Program Planning for FY 2013, p. 4. Applicants were asked to use the dates for the state funding cycle, July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013, in the application. For the FY13 open and competitive year, all classes will be initially entered for the timeframe between 7/1/2012 and 6/30/2013. Depending on what services are funded in the new funding cycle, ACLS will determine whether the funding will be state, federal or both state and federal, and plans will be amended accordingly at that time. At that time, the dates may change to federal funding (September 1, 2013 – August 31, 2013). All applicants should include both fund codes ("540/541") on the budget pages. If only one source of funds is used (either state or federal) ACLS will simply delete the fund code not used.

- Q. What will Adult Career Pathways grant recipients be required to use to assess academic ability? Are we prohibited from using the TABE 9/10 as a placement tool and will we be required to use the MAPT to document educational gain?*
- A. Adult Career Pathways grant recipients must comply with the US Department of Education’s National Reporting System requirements, and will be required to use the Massachusetts approved valid and reliable student assessments.
- Q. When we enter the Adult Career Pathways program design and submit data into SMARTT, will it all be one program, or two separate programs?*
- A. You will notice that ACLS is not asking for a SMARTT plan at this time; Adult Career Pathways services will be outside of the ABE Rates structure. Applicants are asked to adhere to the ABE Rates in terms of compensating staff, but are not required to adhere to the other formulas in the rates. Guidance for entering Adult Career Pathways services into SMARTT will be provided during funding negotiations.
- Q. What kind of programming is allowed in the Adult Career Pathways grant program?*
- A. In addition to the Fund Use section of the RFP, see the Priorities section (page 96 of the bound copy distributed at bidders conferences). The priorities identified by each local workforce board describe the services to be funded in each region.
- Q. Is it allowable in the Adult Career Pathways grant program to work with subcontractors?*
- A. There is nothing in the RFP that prohibits subcontracts and/or collaborations.
- Q. Can the Career Pathways program activity take place at the CALC?*
- A. Yes
- Q. In terms of program design, do the ABE Guidelines apply?*
- A. No. The Adult Career Pathways grant recipients will be expected to adhere to the rate-based staff salaries, but are not subject to the other requirements outlined in the ABE Guidelines.
- Q. Can programs serve a higher level of ESOL learners?*
- A. A learner cannot enter with a Student Performance Level (SPL) level higher than 6, but can exit at a higher level within that program year.
- Q. Is the RFP asking for outcomes?*
- A. Outcomes will be negotiated with funded applicants during funding negotiations.

12. ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

- Q: Should a Statement of Assurances also be submitted with the Adult Career Pathways proposal?*
- A: No.

Q: Is Part III of the Adult Career Pathways RFP the required narrative to identify the program design being proposed? Are other narrative responses required?

A: Program design for Adult Career Pathways is addressed in question #4 of the Required Program Information/Part III. No other narratives are required.

Q: If two programs were to apply as separate but aligned programs, would they be able to share staff? That is, could Teacher or Counselor A, from Program A, serve students at location A during the weeks that Career Pathways class A runs, and then, while still employed by Program A, serve students at Program B in Location B when Career Pathways class B is running? Meanwhile, Teacher B, with a different specialty, would do the same in reverse. So that, for example, there would be someone teaching math throughout the academic year, but at two different programs and sites, while employed by only one program. This option would allow each program to dedicate benefited staff, strengthening the collaboration. It would also allow the agencies, in partnership, to employ staff for all of the months of the programming.

A. Applicants may propose staffing configurations that suit their needs.

13. BUDGET AND BUDGET NARRATIVE

Q. Is the proposal and budget request for one year or two?

A. **The proposal is for two years; the budget is for the first year.**

Q. Which fund code should we apply under, 540 or 541?

A. All applicants should include both fund codes ("540/541") on the budget pages, and apply for funding without distinguishing between state and federal funding. Depending on what services are funded in the new funding cycle, ACLS will determine whether the funding will be state, federal or both state and federal. If only one source of funds is used (either state or federal) ACLS will simply delete the fund code not used.

Q. How will fund codes be determined?

A. ACLS will determine fund codes.

14. MATCH AND MATCH NARRATIVE

Q. On the match budget, can we list services provided by a different grant?

A. There are two general restrictions on use of match funds. First, federal funds may not be used to meet matching requirements on a federal grant; i.e. one federal program cannot be used to match another federal program. Second, the same funds may not be used to meet matching requirements on more than one grant; i.e. one "dollar" of money cannot be used as match funds for two or more other programs. Beyond those requirements, ESE requires that the match cited support the Adult Career Pathways program by adding value to program operations, instructional and support services. Matching resources must be fully documented, auditable and comprised of directly allocable costs, and must correspond to the line item match budget for the grant. Grant applications and budget forms must identify the source

or sources of matching funds. See the RFP Part III, Required Program Information, Section III, Budget, #2, Match Narrative (page 106 in the hard copy of the RFP distributed at bidders conferences). Applicants are advised to refer to the FY 2013 *Massachusetts Guidelines for Effective Adult Basic Education for Community Adult Learning Centers and ABE Programs in Correctional Institutions*, pp. 104-106 for guidance about match requirements and restrictions.

Q. What is the match requirement for Adult Career Pathways, and must it be specific to Adult Career Pathways?

A. A 20% match is required, and it must support the activities of the Adult Career Pathways program.

Q. Should the match narrative consolidate direct and indirect?

A. Adult Career Pathways is a separate RFP and a separate grant program; the applicant is applying for a separate grant. There is not an “indirect” funding category in FY 2013. For the purposes of Maintenance of Effort (MOE), the total of the CALC match and the match for the Adult Career Pathways RFP may be considered to meet the MOE requirement.