Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Strategic Plan to Make Massachusetts a Model Employer for People with Disabilities

5th Annual Report

June 28, 2014

Prepared by:

Massachusetts Taskforce on Employment for People with Disabilities
Introduction

The Model Employer Initiative was launched in June 2009. This report provides an update of our progress on implementation of the Strategic Plan to make Massachusetts a Model Employer for Persons with Disabilities.

Over-arching Goals and Objectives:

The Model Employer Initiative has three overarching goals:

- Seek to increase the number of people with disabilities employed within the Executive Branch;
- Explore methods to ensure the successful retention and promotion of state workers with disabilities and older workers who age into disability;
- Foster an environment and a workforce able to support and facilitate the employment of people with disabilities.

The internal team continues to meet to ensure the on-going implementation of the strategic goals outlined in our strategic plan. During FY 2014, the team members endeavored to maintain the progress we achieved to date through the following goals:

1) Continue to increase and retain the number of people with disabilities employed by the Executive Branch
2) Continue to provide support to Executive Branch Agencies to provide Reasonable Accommodations through RACRA Funds
3) Continue to foster inclusion through the roll-out of the mandatory training for key stakeholder groups
4) Model Employer – Moving Forward – Goals 2015
Outcomes FY2014:

Continue to increase and retain the number of people with disabilities employed by the Executive Branch

- The overall population of self-identified persons with disabilities has increased by 0.1% compared to this same time last fiscal year.
- Self-identified Managers with Disabilities decreased by _0.6% compared to this same time last fiscal year.
- Self-identified persons with disabilities represented 3.04% of executive branch hires and 3.0% of executive branch promotions.

Continue to provide support to Executive Branch Agencies to provide Reasonable Accommodations through RACRA Funds

Providing support to our executive branch agencies through RACRA funds continues to be a priority for this administration. During this past fiscal year through RACRA Funds we received two requests which served a total of seventy-seven individuals. Please refer to the chart below for specific details:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Secretariat</th>
<th>Individuals Served</th>
<th>Request</th>
<th>Approved</th>
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<tr>
<td>Human Resources Division</td>
<td>ANF</td>
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<td>Department of Mental Health</td>
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<td>$729</td>
<td>$729</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
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<td>$1,778</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings
- There were fewer requests for RACRA funding this year than anticipated. The reason for this is not clear. This may be a reflection of training that is being conducted by MOD to agency ADA Coordinators that reinforces an agency’s obligation to provide their employees with reasonable accommodations. It is the hope that the reason for fewer RACRA requests is that agencies have been able to provide reasonable accommodations within the context of their operating budget. MOD has not observed an increase in the number of complaints from employees alleging a failure to provide reasonable accommodations.
Recommendations
- Explore why only two agencies submitted appropriate applications for funding consistent with the RACRA’s purpose.
- Continue to outreach to Secretaries, Agency Heads and ADA Coordinators reminding them of the role and scope of the RACRA as a resource for meeting reasonable accommodation responsibilities.
- Continue through the use of the Dialogue Newsletter to inform employees about the opportunity and the process to make a request for a reasonable accommodation.

Continue to foster inclusion through the roll-out of the mandatory training for key stakeholder groups

- We have trained 52.7% or (24,098) of executive branch employees on the eLearning and 63.3% or (2,895) of the managers have completed the classroom training. This represents a 17.6% increase for eLearning and an 11.0% increase for the managers ½ day classroom training over last fiscal year.

Institutionalizing the Model Employer

- Through our Dialogue Newsletter we continue to keep our stakeholders informed of our progress towards becoming a model employer. We continue to bring them noteworthy articles and keep them informed of changes in the workplace. This past fiscal year editions included the following topics:
  - An Advocate Becomes a Leader

- We continued our partnership with ITD, serving as a second tier of review to ensure that any new applications, products and services being launched within the executive branch were accessible. This included such projects as:
  - Edit the Commonwealth Employment Opportunities (CEO) website to (1) Add specific language that reflects our efforts to promote employment opportunities for persons with disabilities and (2) incorporated the “We Are / I Am” marketing effort on the website.
  - Partnered with the Human Resources Advisory Council (HRAC) to convene a focus group of hiring managers and ADA/504 Coordinators to identify barriers to employment on the part of persons with disabilities.
    - Results were a waiver process to remove barriers to employment through language in current and future job descriptions.
**Moving Forward - Goals for FY2015:**

I. **Increase the number of persons with disabilities employed within the Executive Branch**

Increasing the number of qualified individuals with disabilities who gain employment requires further integration of our Model Employer efforts into our existing affirmative action and diversity efforts. The following objectives and preliminary action steps have been identified to address this goal.

- Partner with community-based, disability-serving organizations to recruit qualified persons with disabilities to apply for employment opportunities. Such organizations include the Disability Policy Consortium, the Employment Advocacy Group, Independent Living Centers, and other organizations.

- Partner with our Vocational Rehabilitation agencies to explore ways to align these agencies’ employment goals with our Model Employer efforts.

- Work with a qualified marketing firm to devise effective strategies to market the state as a model employer.

II. **Foster a workforce environment able to support and facilitate employment of persons with disabilities**

- Continue existing efforts to offer in-class, half-day training to managers and e-learning to non-managers. The purpose of the training is to foster enhanced knowledge of applicable legal, regulatory and administrative requirements and practices related to applicants and employees with disabilities.

- Continue existing efforts to offer full-day training to 504/ADA Coordinators on the broad range of legal, regulatory and administrative requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

- Continue to make progress in efforts that complement the Model Employer effort. Specifically, continue to align capital planning and budgeting with efforts to improve accessibility to public buildings and programs, and continue to make progress vis-à-vis the Information Technology Accessibility Roadmap.