



Metro North Regional Employment Board

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September 15, 2017

Commissioner Bruce W. Stebbins
Massachusetts Gaming Commission
101 Federal Street, 12th Floor
Boston, MA 02110

Dear Commissioner Stebbins,

Thank you for inviting the Metro North Regional Employment Board to submit suggestions on the potential use of the Gaming Economic Development Fund. After discussion and consideration, we respectfully submit the following suggestions:

- 1. Scholarships for existing job training/higher education programs in casino occupations:** To prepare Massachusetts residents to be qualified for employment at the casinos, job training and education are imperative. The majority of the casino jobs will be in gaming, culinary, hospitality, cash handling, security, marketing, and business administration. Many job training and higher education programs already exist in these fields. Funds could be used for scholarships for these existing programs for participants who are not able to access the extremely limited current public funding for job training.
- 2. New job training programs:** For some of the casino jobs, either no training program currently exists or the capacity of the current programs will be insufficient. Thus, we recommend that funds be procured to develop new education and training programs for casino and casino related employment.
- 3. Career Center in Everett:** Given the location of Wynn Boston Harbor, we strongly advocate for funding a Career Center in the city of Everett focused on casino and casino related careers. The Career Center could be located at City Hall or onsite at the casino and staffed by Metro North's Career Center operator. In order for local residents to obtain casino jobs, it is imperative that they have targeted career counseling and access to resources and information that can lead to a casino career pathway.
- 4. Basic skills remediation:** Many residents do not possess the requisite basic skills, such as English and math, to access casino employment or job training preparation. The current adult basic education (ABE) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs have waiting lists. Additional ABE and ESOL classes are essential to prepare residents for employment, education, or training in order to access casino careers. The ABE/ESOL funded by the Economic Development Fund could be contextualized to focus on employment in casino related fields.



5. **Job readiness training:** Similar to a lack of basic skills, many residents require job readiness training in order to be prepared to access employment in a casino. This training includes interviewing preparation, resume writing, effective communication, problem solving, teamwork. Similarly, the job readiness training funded by the Economic Development Fund could be contextualized to focus on employment in casino related fields.
6. **Utilize FY2019 revenue for training for Wynn training:** MGM is scheduled to open in fall 2018 while Wynn Boston Harbor is scheduled to open in June 2019. Giving local residents the ability to be prepared for the first wave of the casino hiring is imperative as it will be by far the time when the greatest number of workers will be hired. Since the Economic Development Fund is a statewide fund, utilizing FY2019 revenue to prepare residents for the opening at Wynn is critical to local residents access to Wynn careers. Funds could be used for short term job training in fields such as culinary, hospitality, gaming, and cash handling.
7. **STEM Networks:** The Massachusetts Executive Office of Education currently funds four STEM Networks statewide. These networks are charged with advancing the statewide STEM Advisory Council's three STEM priorities:
 - a. Expand work-based learning programs
 - b. Develop and expand STEM early college career pathways
 - c. Broaden and deepen computer science & engineering initiatives

Current funding for the Networks is due to end after the current 2018 fiscal year. The Networks are critical investments that align efforts across various stakeholders, including education, workforce development, and business and industry. STEM, and the related projected skills gap in STEM-focused fields, needs to be a continued priority for the Commonwealth. Continued investment in these Networks beyond FY18 will help the Commonwealth be able to address this priority.

8. **Regional plan implementation:** Led by the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, and leveraging the infrastructure of the Governor's Workforce Skills Cabinet, the statewide regional planning process combines the efforts of workforce development, economic development, and education in order to develop workforce and labor market "blueprints" for seven regions across the Commonwealth. The current effort, set to conclude in January 2018, is focused on identifying priority industries and occupations where significant skills gaps exist. However, no current funding exists to implement strategies to address the priorities outlined in the blueprints. Funding from the Economic Development Fund could be used to support the implementation of the regional plans.

The REB is happy to help further in developing or reviewing the White Paper that the Gaming Commission will present to the legislature or help in other way. Thank you for your leadership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sunny Schwartz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sunny" and last name "Schwartz" clearly legible.

Sunny Schwartz
President and CEO