



Commonwealth Workforce Coalition

A Network of Massachusetts Community-Based Workforce Development Practitioners



**United Way
of Massachusetts Bay**

Capacity Building Initiative Peer Learning Project **TOOLKIT**

project duration: June, 2006 – May, 2007



Introduction

The Capacity Building Initiative (CBI) was a year long effort:

- sponsored by the United Way of Massachusetts Bay and coordinated by the Commonwealth Workforce Coalition;
- which operated from June, 2006 through May, 2007;
- delivered staff trainings and convened Peer Learning Projects;
- to provide new staff skills and improve program operations in twelve UWMB affiliate agencies:
 - American Red Cross
 - Asian American Civic Association
 - Cerebral Palsy of Eastern Massachusetts
 - Centro Latino de Chelsea
 - Community Work Services
 - ESAC – GED Plus
 - Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation
 - Jewish Vocational Service
 - Project HOPE – Transition to Work
 - ROCA, Inc.
 - Salem Harbor Community Development Corporation
 - YMCA – Training Inc.

Along with – and sometimes in combination with – staff trainings, the CBI developed and delivered professional development services through Peer Learning Projects (PLPs).

The five PLPs:

- were suggested by staff of the 12 affiliate agencies in CBI planning meetings;
- met 3 to 7 times for about 2.5 hour sessions;
- were made up of four to nine staff, and one CWC representative who convened, facilitated, and supported the work of each PLP;
- provided a context for whole group discussions and smaller workgroups;
- each produced a toolkit which is based on peer learning during the PLP; best models and practices from the 12 affiliate agencies; and research to identify the best information, model programs, and related resources.

The five PLPs were:

➤ Flexible Curriculum and Instruction	➤ On-Line Applications
➤ Managers' PLP	➤ Post Placement/Retention
➤ Marketing to Employers	

UWMB Capacity Building Initiative Framework for Peer Learning Projects

The Peer Learning Projects are groups of staff who have expressed an interest in a specific topic and are committed to learning from their peers about the topic.

Each PLP will:

- Develop a stated purpose
- Meet on a regular basis determined by the participants
- Identify 1-2 products that they will develop over a course of ongoing meetings and communications. The products:
 - are something that can be shared with and used by all programs participating in the UWMB Capacity Building Initiative;
 - will be developed and ready to implement by Spring 2007.

Participants will:

- Attend each session of the Peer Learning Project -
 - new staff will be encouraged to join the PLPs throughout the process
- Jointly agree to the purpose of the PLP
- Actively contribute to the development of a group product identified by the PLP (in working sessions and in-between meetings through email/phone/listservs)
- Share knowledge and expertise
- Research resources
- Other

CWC will:

- Provide one consistent facilitator for each PLP
- The facilitator will be responsible for:
 - coordinating the meetings of the PLP and communicating directly with the participants regarding logistics and content;
 - identifying resources for the group;
 - keeping to the timeline and tracking attendance;
 - following up with staff who do not attend;
 - summarizing PLP activities for monthly updates to be sent to the lead representatives of each participating organization.