

(vi) 1 representative each from the Maryland Higher Education Commission, the State Department of Education, and the Work Force Investment Board.
[3-503.] 3-703.

(a) The Secretary or the Secretary's designee shall direct the Partnership for Workforce Quality Program.

(b) The Secretary shall provide training assistance under the Program only at the specific request of an employer or group of employers.

(c) (1) Except as provided in paragraphs (2), (3), (4), and (5) of this subsection, the Secretary shall establish eligibility criteria and priorities for assistance under the Partnership for Workforce Quality Program.

(2) Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (1) of this subsection, an employer receiving assistance under the Program:

(i) Shall be a Maryland employer that operates under the provisions of Title 8 of the Labor and Employment Article and has 500 or fewer full-time employees;

(ii) Shall request training assistance for job specific skills;

(iii) Shall request training assistance for Maryland-based employees who are covered under the provisions of Title 8 of the Labor and Employment Article; and

(iv) Shall request training assistance to upgrade or retrain existing employees.

(3) Not less than 60 percent of all funds available shall be reserved for Maryland employers with 100 or fewer Maryland-based employees.

(4) No single Maryland employer shall receive more than the greater of \$25,000 or 5 percent of total funds available to the Program within a year.

(5) Priority shall be given to Maryland employers who are:

(i) Manufacturers; or

(ii) Threatened by the pressures of increased foreign or domestic competition.

(d) (1) The Secretary shall utilize local advisory groups such as private industry councils, and joint apprenticeship committees, to identify employers in need of assistance.

(2) Business assistance services provided by the Program shall:

(i) Determine whether the employer's specific needs are best met by training, by other types of assistance, or by a combination of services;

(ii) Identify the availability of existing training programs which could be adapted to meet the employer's needs;