



MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board-WIOA Local 4-Year Plan Fiscal Years 2022-2025

Preamble

The MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board (BWB) is a business-led, policy-setting board that oversees workforce development initiatives in the thirty-two community region stretching from Vermont, New York, Connecticut and Hampden/Franklin/Hampshire counties. Pittsfield Mayor Linda Tyler appoints Board members that are composed of business, civic, education, labor, and community leaders. Established under federal law, the Board's Chairman is a member of the private sector. The current Board Chair is Eva Sheridan from Boyd Technologies. We employ a staff of full-time professionals however; the Board consists entirely of volunteers. All Board meetings are open to the public.

We are conveners, brokers and collaborators organizing all workforce development efforts in the cities of Pittsfield and North Adams and the towns of Adams, Alford, Becket, Cheshire, Clarksburg, Dalton, Egremont, Florida, Great Barrington, Hancock, Hinsdale, Lanesboro, Lee, Lenox, Monterey, Mt. Washington, New Ashford, New Marlborough, Otis, Peru, Richmond, Sandisfield, Savoy, Sheffield, Stockbridge, Tyringham, Washington, West Stockbridge, Williamstown, and Windsor. We oversee all actions and collaborate on every aspect of the operations of the MassHire Berkshire Career Center which is operated jointly by Berkshire Training & Employment, Inc. and the Massachusetts Division of Career Services (MDCS).

One of our main responsibilities is to direct federal, state and private funding for educational and occupational skills programs. In addition to responsibilities mandated under the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA), we are called upon to play a major role in a variety of workforce initiatives that define our goals based on local community needs.

We are directed by our Chief Elected Official, Board of Directors and the several standing committees that include our Executive Committee, Evaluation Committee, Marketing Committee and the Youth Council. The members of these committees volunteer their time in providing us with their expertise, solutions and connections that assist us in moving the needle in workforce development exponentially.

Our Mission and Vision

To provide leadership for workforce development in Berkshire County by aligning education and training with local labor market needs. The MassHire system creates and sustains powerful connections between businesses and job seekers through a statewide network of employment professionals. MassHire envisions a better future for people and businesses of Massachusetts through meaningful work and sustainable growth.

The MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board's vision is to excel as the primary workforce resource in Berkshire County area for labor market information, skills enhancement, customized training, and youth college/career readiness programming. Working in partnership with business and industry, economic development organizations, education, labor, community agencies, government agencies and individuals, we provide quality workforce development activities resulting in a skilled workforce that exceeds the needs of today's employers and tomorrow's job challenges. The BWB is building a better workforce by developing our talent at all levels.

(a) Strategic Planning elements, including:

(1) A regional (local) analysis of: (i) Economic conditions including existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations; and ii) Employment needs of businesses in existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations. iii) As appropriate, your local area may use an existing analysis, which is a timely current description of the regional economy, to meet the requirements of paragraphs (a)(1)(i) and (ii) of this section; Regional plan information may be used as applicable to the local area. However, local analysis that yields information that is not in the regional plan should be included in this response.

The Berkshire Workforce Strategic Planning analysis includes data and a compilation from the following regional planning documents:

- **Berkshire Skills Cabinet** - <https://masshireberkshire.com/about/key-initiatives/>
- **Berkshire Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)** planning efforts - <http://berkshireplanning.org/initiatives/berkshire-comprehensive-economic-development-strategy-ceds>
- **Berkshire Workforce Board's annual Workforce Blueprint 2021** <https://masshireberkshire.com/wp-content/uploads/Berkshire-Workforce-Blueprint-2020-Update.pdf>
- 1Berkshire's **Berkshire Blueprint 2.0** - [Blueprint 2.0 | The Future of Berkshire County | 1Berkshire](#)
- **Berkshire Compact for Education** – a group of regional civic, education and business leaders who seek to ensure the well-being of each individual and the strength of our economy and community by raising the educational access, aspirations, and attainment of all Berkshire County residents.
- **Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation's A Closer Look** community assessment process to learn more about the pressing issues facing our region - <http://www.berkshiretaconic.org/bLearnAboutBTCF/OurInitiatives/ReportACloserLook.aspx>
- Berkshire United Way's Economic Prosperity Impact Council which is a community-driven coalition that aims to build pathways to sustainable incomes - <https://www.berkshireunitedway.org/economic-prosperity-impact-council-epic>
- **Berkshire Education Task Force** which will make recommendations to improve access to educational programs to prepare children for college, career and life in the Berkshires. [Berkshire County Education Task Force | Pittsfield, MA \(berkshireeducationtaskforce.org\)](#)

Recovery from the recession has been slow in the Berkshires and now with the impact of COVID-19, the region is preparing for its future. The Berkshires has long been known as a center for creativity and innovation and will continue to build on our successes to recover from the pandemic. As the economic base continues to shift, the need for high-quality jobs that pay living wages remains a primary concern for residents of all ages, incomes and education levels.

Several sectors are showing potential for growth, such as healthcare, creative industries, entrepreneurship, manufacturing, and professional/technical related industries, may hold promise for attracting and sustaining vibrant local communities.

Today’s Berkshire economy is driven by jobs in health care and social assistance (19% of jobs), retail (14.1%), educational services (12.9%), accommodation & food (11.9%), business services (10%), Manufacturing (7.4%) and other sectors representing 15%.

Critical Industries (main source of employment)	Emerging Industries (sectors that are growing)	Top Training Needs
Healthcare & Social Assistance (19%)	Health Care & Social Assistance (6% growth)	Personal skills (89%)
Retail Trade (14.1%)	Professional, Scientific, and Technical (4.0%)	Interpersonal skills (83%)
Educational Services (12.9%)	Trade and Transportation (4.0 % growth)	Basic Skills (79%)
Accommodation & Food (11.9%) Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation (3.4%)	Manufacturing (fabricated metal products, mineral, etc.) (2.1% growth)	Thinking skills (71%)
Business Services (10%)	Travel & Tourism related (arts and entertainment) (2% growth)	Resource skills (63%)
Manufacturing (7.4%) Construction (4.8%) seasonal)	Construction (4.3 growth)	
Other Sectors (15%) including; Trade & transportation, public admin; natural resources; Gov’t; other services	Source: ES202 data 2017	

Industries that saw the most job growth between 2010-2019 include wholesale trade, accommodation and food services, and health care and social assistance, along with manufacturing and professional/technical sectors. When looking at data trends, all industries combined in the Berkshires have been experiencing very low levels of job growth over recent years and that is projected to continue, with 2% jobs growth between 2017 and 2022 projected.

Health Care and Social Assistance is the largest industry in the County, with over 13,500 jobs. Unlike all industries combined, Health Care and Social Assistance individually is projected to grow by 6% or 799 jobs by 2022. Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services industry is also projected to growth by 4% or 146 jobs which will continue to put a strain on the workforce as it is already difficult to find enough engineers to fill the positions as described by General Dynamics. Professional, Scientific and Technical is followed in number of total job growth by Government at 139 jobs, a 2% growth, and Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation projected to add 47 jobs, another 2% growth. Manufacturing is projected to grow at 2.1% by 2022 and the demand exists as employers are struggling to find workers which leads to constraints related to expansion. Berkshire manufacturing companies’ dynamics are shifting from traditional towards

more advanced, technical manufacturing including information technology/cyber-security, automation, robotics, Lean, and other operational methods.

Compared to national averages, industries with higher-than-average concentrations of employment here include arts, entertainment and recreation; educational series; retail trade; and accommodation and food services. The region also has high levels of self-employment. The highest average annual earnings for industries were in finance, insurance and manufacturing (\$70K and above).

As identified in the Berkshire Skills Blueprint, the following are our top economic, workforce and education industries:

- **Health Care:** As the largest and fastest growing industry in the Berkshires, Health Care and Social Assistance is vital to the Berkshire economy. With an aging population, the provision of health services will grow in importance and it will be necessary to continue to prepare a high-quality workforce. This industry also offers career pathways, has a supply gap in terms of more openings than applicants, is aligned with the Region's economic development strategies, and is a resilient industry. The Health Care industry faces significant workforce development challenges as many employers are unable to find a sufficient number of qualified applicants to fill open positions. The industry struggles with not having enough training programs that are supportive of the interested participants' schedules and meet participant needs in terms of timing, location, transportation, child care, and other constraints. Healthcare contributes \$702,000,000 to The Berkshires' gross regional product and employs nearly 11,500 people. While most healthcare businesses and organizations serve the needs of Berkshire residents, some also provide services outside the county. These new markets, as well as prototyping of new products and services, hold the potential to help expand and sustain the cluster in the future.
- **Advanced Manufacturing:** As one of the region's top five largest industries, Advanced Manufacturing is a priority for the Berkshires in terms of supporting the overall economy. The industry has experienced a consistent need for employees, is aligned with the region's economic development plan, offers career pathways, and includes high growth/wage occupations. The manufacturing industry is facing workforce development challenges due to a lack of applicants who are willing and able to work the different shifts that are required, such as nights and weekends. Additionally, the lack of transportation remains an issue for the workforce as they are unable to take public transportation. Another challenge related to workforce development for the Manufacturing industry is the cost of creating appropriate and adequate training programs that meet the needs of the ever-changing industry, including lack of access to high tech equipment. Many employers also show concern related to work readiness of the applicants including needing workers who have greater level of fluency in technology, problem solving skills, and general work ethic. This industry is facing high replacement demand as workers are getting older and closer to retirement age. There are approximately 6,500 Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering jobs in the Berkshires, and the average wage/salary for Berkshire County jobs in this field is approximately \$72,477. This cluster contributes \$917,000,000 to The Berkshires' gross regional product annually, the most of any of the priority clusters. Additionally, this cluster has a job multiplier of 4.8,

meaning that for every job created in advanced manufacturing and engineering services, 3.8 are created in other industries.

- **Hospitality/Tourism:** The Berkshires are well known as a tourist destination, with a focus on health and wellness. With a high location quotient for Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, the area has a wide variety of resorts, hotels, cultural institutions, and recreation destinations. Building on this industry is important to the overall economy as it serves not only tourists but also builds on the quality of life for residents. This industry is also in line with the Region's economy development strategy, experiences supply gaps, and offers career pathways. Berkshire-based Hospitality and Tourism establishments directly employ 6,329 workers. Hospitality and tourism contribute much more to the Berkshire economy than its employment numbers and the industry's \$400 million in Gross Regional Product suggest. According to the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism, visitors to the Berkshires in 2017 spent \$517 million in the local economy and generated local tax receipts of \$14.9 million and state tax receipts of \$27 million. Moreover, spending by visitors increased by nearly 30 percent in the last five years, which outpaces other regions in the state, according to tourism officials.
- **Education:** is the region's 3rd largest industry sector and has great potential for growth. There are over 50 job openings for teachers, pre-school teacher assistants, special education and residential teacher and 45% of current educators are at retirement age.
- **Creative Economy** – the creative economy is the intersection of arts, culture, innovation and commerce and an important economic engine to cultivate the entrepreneurialism in the region. The creative economy supports approximately [5,500 jobs](#) or roughly 6.4% of all jobs in the county. Between 2010 and 2017, the creative sector saw a 9.5% increase in jobs. This cluster directly contributes approximately \$398,000,000 to The Berkshires' gross regional product annually. Additionally, the creative economy has a profound impact on the Hospitality and Tourism cluster, drawing visitors to the region for performances, art exhibitions, and hand-crafted goods of all types.
- **Business & Finance** – is the region's 4th largest sector and has great potential for growth and career ladder opportunities.

Demographics - Since 2012, Berkshire County has seen a 3.1% decline in the population, losing over 3,900 residents. This trend is projected to continue as the county is projected to lose an additional 2,700 residents over the next five years, a further 2.2% decline in population. The age cohort projected to see the largest decline in population is residents ages 20-24 years old. Over the next five years, Berkshire County is projected to lose nearly 2,000 people within this cohort, a 22% decline. This is important for the workforce because losing people between the ages of 20-24 will increase workforce supply challenges for local employers. Other cohorts that are projected to experience large population declines include people ages 45-49 and people ages 50-54, both cohorts projected to experience an 18% decline in population. The population cohorts that are projected to grow within the next five years include people ages 75-79 and 70-74, projecting to increase by 28% and 26%, respectively, with a combined addition of over 2,900 residents.

Within Berkshire County there is a lower-than-average number of millennial residents, defined as being between the ages of 20-34. Berkshire County currently has an estimated 21,800 millennials.

The lack of this younger population can exacerbate the workforce supply challenges that occur due to high labor force participation and low unemployment. Additionally, Berkshire County has a large portion of the population who are at or near retirement age. The number of people in the county who are considered to be retiring soon, defined as people ages 65 and older, total over 28,100, which is notably higher than the national average as a percent of the full population.

The population of Berkshire County also shows a lack of racial diversity, with nearly 89% of the population identifying as White, Non-Hispanic, followed by the next largest cohort of 3.7% of population identifying as White, Hispanic, and another 3% identifying as Black, Non-Hispanic. However, over the next five years, the number of people identifying as White, Hispanic is projected to increase by 11%, adding nearly 500 residents. Additionally, the number of people identifying as Black, Hispanic is projected to increase by 6%, adding over 230 residents. Attracting these cohorts may help mitigate the decline in working age residents.

Nearly 18% of the Berkshire County population holds a bachelor's degree, which is about 0.5% lower than the national average. However, nearly 10% hold an associate's degree which is about 1.5% above the nation average, and an additional 14% of the population has a graduate degree or higher, which is about 4 percentage points higher than the national average at 11% of the population.

The Berkshires are feeling the impact of a number of different forces when it comes to the ability to grow the economy and create opportunities for residents and businesses to thrive. At nearly 1,000 square miles and around 130,000 people, this rural county truly is picturesque yet can be isolating for workers and residents looking to connect with opportunities and community. Like other similar rural regions, the Berkshires began losing population in the 1970's as manufacturing companies started to decline, including the loss of GE Plastics headquartered in Pittsfield and Sprague Electric in North Adams.

By 2010, it was revealed that the Region lost more than 18,000 people since 1970's, and in 2010 more people died than were born and more people left the region than moved to it. According to projections prepared by the Planning Commission, the population decline could increase by 37% by 2030 or an additional 12,420 fewer people. Many organizations are working to stop this decline, including an effort that started in 2006 which included a task force charged with coordinating a long-term plan known as the Berkshire Initiative for Growth (BIG) to understand and explore solutions to the Region's population loss. Efforts were focused on the retention and recruitment of young adults (ages 22-40) and the recommendations identified by that task force are included in this Blueprint.

Industries are having a very hard time filling positions, with the Berkshire's having the largest job vacancy rate since the 1990's, exceeding the state's average (Berkshires job vacancy rate is 5.1% and Massachusetts is 4.8%). More specifically, over the past decade, one of the largest private sector employers (GD) has not been able to attract/retain enough workers and consistently reports needing engineers to fill positions. The entire Berkshire Region is under constant demand for at least 100 engineers. Recently, MCLA, in consultation with GD added an

electrical engineering concentration to the computer science curricular offerings.

Overall, average wages are low in the Berkshire Region at \$43,418 compared to the State average of \$63,589. In the Berkshire Region, the Health Care and Social Assistance industry pays higher than the County average at \$47,000, and Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services pays far higher than the County average at nearly \$66,500.

In addition to the overarching economic trends, some of the specific events that are impacting the Berkshires include:

- Announcement of Wayfair developing 300 job opportunities (December 2018)
- SABIC (formerly GE) closed in 2015 eliminating 200 engineering jobs
- In 2017, 8 companies closed/downsized impacting 465 employees (3 manufacturing companies, 4 retail companies, and 1 hospitality company)
- Declining mall retail activity (Berkshire Mall ost Penny's, Sears, Macys and several other stores during the past decade) but growing mom & pop shops and Lee Outlets

The top challenges facing our business community over the next five years are:

1. **Finding skilled talent:** Employees lack the essential jobs skills, work readiness skills, and overall work ethic and motivation to be successful in many of the jobs available within Berkshire County. This illustrates both the skills gap issue as well as reduces the ability of employers to fill open positions and hire for new positions.
2. **Retaining talent:** As previously noted, Berkshire County has a lower than average number of millennials working within the region, additionally, the county is projected to see a continued and substantial decline of people aged 20-24 over the next five years. The existing population is aging and there are a large number of people 65 and older at risk of retirement. The lack of millennials, high rate of retirement, the challenges of retaining college graduates, and overall population loss, makes retaining talent crucial for the health and stability of the Berkshire County economy.
3. **Rising cost of doing business:** The cost for employers to both start, expand, and continue operations in Berkshire County is high as a result of infrastructure issues including cost of transportation and energy and a deficiency in both broadband infrastructure and public transit.

The top opportunities related to business and industry over the next five years are:

1. **Variety of industries and occupations:** In Berkshire County, the economy is diversified and there are a variety of industry sectors which allow for a wide range of job opportunities at varying education and experience levels, such as engineering, nursing, hospitality, and business management.
2. **Partnerships with educational institutions:** Within the county there are a number of four-year colleges, community colleges, and technical schools which act as partners in the workforce and economic development sectors. Our education partners are responsive and have established specific sector-based training and learning programs, as well as contributed to creation and sustainability of career pathways. Industry sectors with strong education partners include healthcare, manufacturing, and the creative economy.
3. **Growing entrepreneurial spirit:** Berkshire County is particularly attractive to those looking to start their own business, with affordable space, relatively low cost of living,

and a growing entrepreneurial ecosystem. The region is focusing efforts on communication, infrastructure, social opportunities, and workforce programming. There have been recent efforts to reimagine the region with a focus on the creative and innovative economy with many new start-ups and makerspaces being developed.

(2) Describe the knowledge and skills needed to meet the employment needs of the businesses in your region, including employment needs in in-demand industry sectors and occupations.

To meet employer needs for specific skills and knowledge from their employees, the workforce board:

- Performs real time analyses of the economic conditions in the region to learn the needed knowledge and skills of the region, learn about the workforce of its region, and workforce development activities it needs including education and training described in WIOA §108(b)(1)(D), and regularly updates such information;
- Continues to assist the Governor in developing the statewide workforce and labor market information system described in §15(e) of the Wagner-Peyser Act (29 U.S.C. 491-2(e)), specifically in the collection, analysis, and utilization of workforce and labor market information for the region;
- Conducts other research, data collection, surveys and analysis related to the workforce needs of the regional economy after receiving input from a wide array of stake-holders and then determines training necessary to carry out these functions;

Past employer feed-back indicates a convergence of common industry skill factors that contribute to the staffing challenges employers are facing when hiring and retaining qualified labor. Employers need job seekers to have soft skills, critical thinking skills, and ability to keep composure in the workplace. Other common employer required and needed skill examples include:

- Job seekers need experience with the Microsoft suite.
- Many employers require job seekers to have good driving records, valid driver license, and able to pass a CORI.
- Employers need job seekers to have financial literacy and able to pass a financial background check.
- Job seekers should have good customer service skills and know how to work in teams.

Employers also felt there was a generational gap. Youth that are more oriented to technology and but not working in teams using critical thinking skills. Employers feel that the younger generation has:

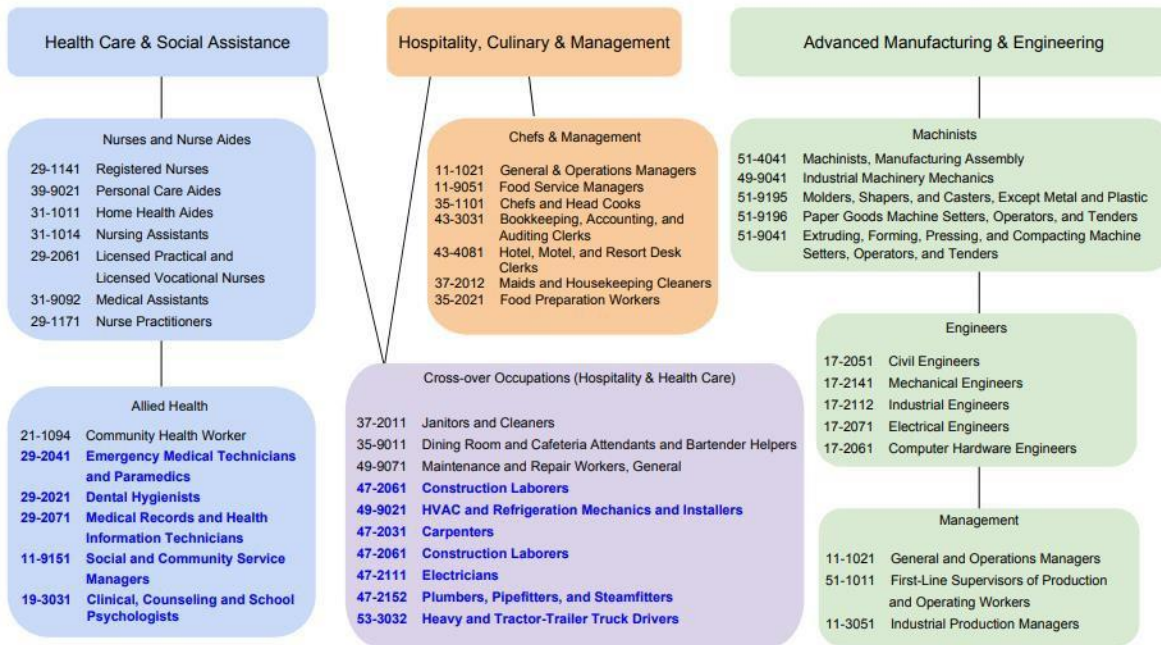
- poor conflict resolution skills
- poor communication and writing skills
- poor social skills
- some don't know how to write or read language written in cursive
- need skills on how to handle stress in the workplace

The following chart details skills employers need job applicants to possess. When we develop training plans from grants awarded to us, we make conscious decisions to also include as essential skill training components as the funding allows.

21 st CENTURY IN-DEMAND SKILLS *Indicates Industry Specific Skills			
ENTRY LEVEL			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication Skills (Oral and Written) Ability to Take Direction Work Ethic Customer Service Drug Free Clean Driving History* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Problem Solving Attention to Quality, Safety, and Precision* Basic Computer Aptitude Punctuality and Reliability Integrity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comprehension Teamwork Troubleshooting* Understanding of Basic Functions of Equipment or Tools* Adaptability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planned Coordination and Project Management* Math Skills* Professionalism Operating Machine Controls*
MID-LEVEL/TECHNICIAN			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant work experience Certifications Culture Fit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership Skills Advanced Technical Skills* Independent/Self-Starter Supervisory Skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advanced Communication Skills Professionalism/Customer Service Project Management* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Troubleshooting* Research* Capabilities Decision Making Skills and Courage
MANAGEMENT /ADVANCED LEVEL			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advanced Experience Advanced Certifications Long-Term Vision/Planning Negotiation Skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Management and Mastery of the Process (Proposal, Development, Execution, Completion, Evaluation/Feedback) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advanced Problem Solving Collaboration/Teamwork Ability to Work With Diverse Workforce Business/Financial Acumen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Service Commitment to Culture Self-Development Failure Analysis

Priority occupations include:

Berkshire Workforce Blueprint - Priority Industries & Occupations



Berkshire Region - Critical Non-Priority Industries



- Nursing, surgical technicians and healthcare technicians
- Engineering – over 125 job openings in software and hardware engineering

- Managers, assistant managers, and office support staff are needed across all industry sectors.
- Teachers and administrators
- Trades workers
- CDL drivers
- Cyber security and technology

(3) Please provide an analysis of your regional workforce, including current labor force employment and unemployment data, information on labor market trends, and educational and skill levels of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment.

While job growth in the region since 2010 has been positive at 3.3%, it has been weaker than the U.S average of 9%. The current employment rate of 6.1% (June 2021) is higher than the Massachusetts rate of 5.1% and the national rate of 5.9%. The labor participation rate was 61.6%, the same as the national rate. There are 37% of Berkshire residents not in the labor force. As reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there were job gains in health care, manufacturing, and in trade and transportation and professional/business services during November 2020.

(4) Please provide an analysis of workforce development activities, including education and training, in the local area. This analysis must: a) include strengths and weaknesses of workforce development i. education and skill needs of the workforce; ii. individuals with barriers to employment; iii. employment needs of businesses.

The Berkshire Workforce Board strives to deliver the highest quality of workforce development services and activities in partnership with our Community College, Career Center, employers and community partners and has implemented a variety of strategic workforce initiatives over the past 20 years. Our strengths are a variety of workforce interventions available in our region targeting youth pipeline, low-income adults and dislocated workers, particularly those with barriers to employment, and the incumbent workforce. In addition, our regional post-secondary educational programs have capacity to expand career pathway and credentialing programs in our priority industries and occupational groupings. Our workforce development ecosystem is networked with our community serving organizations and non-profit agencies thereby allowing for a continuum of programming and an array of services to individuals and customers.

Educational initiatives:

- Berkshire Workforce Board's Youth Council – implements the region's college/career readiness programming throughout the 12 school districts
- Berkshire Compact for Education – enhancing the access, aspirations, and attainment of post-secondary high school education and training for all members of the community.
- Berkshire United Way's Economic Prosperity Impact Council – countywide, community-led coalition that aims to build pathways to sustainable incomes

Economic development:

- 1Berkshire – voice of the business community, implementing leadership programs,entrepreneurial business opportunities, *The Jobs Thing*, and business retention and expansion programs. Strategies to attract/retainmillennials.
- Berkshire Community Taconic Foundation – educational attainment, community engagement, economic opportunity and philanthropic stewardship
- Berkshire Regional Planning Commission’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy – on-going economic development strategies and measuring progress of brownfields, community development block grants, and sustainable efforts for conservation, recreation, agriculture, energy, housing, infrastructure and land use.

Sector partnerships:

- Health Care Collaborative – convenes quarterly to identify recruitment and retention strategies and to leverage training resources.
- Advanced Manufacturing Partnership – convenes twice annually to identify recruitment and retention strategies and training opportunities. Promotes October as Manufacturing month.
- Berkshire STEM – convenes monthly to promote STEM opportunities and promote STEM week
- Customer Service Training through National Retail Federation to gear up for new customer service positions

Berkshire Recruiter - The Berkshire Workforce Board is a high performing workforce board that creates and sustains powerful connections between businesses and jobseekers through a statewide and regional network of employment professionals. Since 1983, the board serves as the oversight and policy-making body for federally funded employment and training services in the region, and has the broader role of addressing critical labor market issues and the development of strategic partnerships by providing labor market information, employer/sector training opportunities, and a myriad of college/career readiness programming. The Berkshire Recruiter initiative is designed to identify employer recruitment/retention needs and connect atypical job seekers and career changers to those opportunities. Activities include monthly Job Seeker/Career Changer Meet Ups, Over 50 Job Fair, and convening human resource professionals on a bi-monthly basis.

The strengths of the workforce development activities in the Berkshires include:

- Strong regional and collaborative business-education partnerships;
- Endorsement of an industry, career pathway approach in program design, implementation and execution;
- Variety of sectors and wide range of job opportunities (engineering, nursing, management, etc.);
- Strong partnerships with educational institutions that are responsive and have established sector training programs and career pathways (healthcare, manufacturing & creative economy);
- Regional approach to programming and planning;

- Utilization of non-WIOA funding sources to sustain programming; and,
- Commitment to the WIOA partnership and the overarching concept of shared customers and utilization of the Career Center as the hub for employment services.

The Weaknesses of the workforce development activities in the Berkshires include:

- Finding skilled talent (essential skills and motivation) and filling openings (skills gap);
- Retaining talent (aging workforce; transfer of knowledge; population loss);
- Rising cost of doing business, limited broadband;
- Limited training providers and lack of occupational skills programming;
- Lack of public transportation throughout the region for shift work and access to training vendors;
- Older workers are experiencing a harder time re-engaging with employers; and
- Perceived lack of available jobs and customers with multiple barriers to employment

The Berkshire Workforce Board has long taken an industry sector approach when designing and implementing programming for the region. Currently, we have focused on three primary sectors based on our Berkshire Labor Market Blueprint. These include: (1) Health Care and Social Assistance, (2) Advanced Manufacturing, and (3) Hospitality/Management. Our efforts expanded during FY21 to include Trades occupations and CDL drivers. These efforts rely heavily on efforts of our local community college as well as input from employers on curriculum design and the implementation of various forms of workplace education and experiences.

(5) Please describe your Board's strategic vision to support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency. This must include goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce (including youth and individuals with barriers to employment), and goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on performance indicators described in § 677.155(a)(1). The primary indicators of performance include: a) The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program; b) The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program; c) Median earnings of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program; d) The percentage of those participants enrolled in an education or training program (excluding those in on-the-job training (OJT) and customized training) who attained a recognized postsecondary credential or a secondary school diploma, or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within 1 year after exit from the program

As outlined as part of our FY19-FY22 Strategic Planning efforts, the Berkshire Workforce Board has the following mission, vision, and strategic plan for the Berkshire workforce system.

The Berkshire Workforce Board Mission - To provide leadership for workforce development in Berkshire County by aligning education and training with local labor market needs.

The MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board's vision is to excel as the primary workforce

resource in Berkshire County area for labor market information, skills enhancement, customized training, and youth college/career readiness programming. Working in partnership with business and industry, economic development organizations, education, labor, community agencies, government agencies and individuals, we provide quality workforce development activities resulting in a skilled workforce that exceeds the needs of today's employers and tomorrow's job challenges.

The Berkshire Workforce Board's Strategic Plan relates directly to performance accountability as we set goals for the Workforce Board and Career Center's performance and outcomes that works continuously to respond to and address the larger issues of workforce pipelines, business growth and success, and economic development that are the context for successful work readiness, job training and placement.

The following chart indicates the FY2022 Workforce Priorities and Strategies based on the labor market need in our region.

Berkshire County Workforce Development Priorities FY2022 – Building Tomorrow's Workforce

Labor Market Need	Strategy	Objective	Metric	
Recognized catalyst for innovative workforce development and Labor Market Resource	Implement Regional Skills Strategy Plan	Produce a regional workforce, economic, & education blueprint with labor market supply & demand	Host regional sessions Develop Blueprint Develop marketing strategies for career pathway enhancement	Blueprint by Dec
	Provide current LMI data to community	Gather LMI data quarterly Convene with business leaders	Produce quarterly dashboard Annual workforce blueprint Meet monthly with business leaders	4 reports 1 annual 12 business
	Increase the number of companies accessing training resources	Promote Workforce Training	Conduct 3 workforce training sessions; target 75 companies; 4 media outlets and 250 flyers mailed Assist 15 companies with applications	75 companies 4 media 250 flyers 15 apply

	Increase effectiveness and visibility of BWB and workforce system	Gain private sector leader advocates	Engage 2 private sector leaders on board Conduct site visits Review Workforce Training fund grants	3 leaders 12 new companies
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Improve core competencies and readiness of youth	Connect youth to Career Immersion (work-based-learning) activities	Increase # of internships & structured work experiences; increased focus on STEM	# internships/work experiences # STEM internships # specialized WBL experiences (i.e. Youth Works, WIA)	400 150 100
	Connect youth to Career Awareness & Exploration activities	Increase # of career awareness (i.e. career fair) & exploration (i.e. job shadow) activities	#youth in awareness activities #youth in exploration activities #youth in STEM focused activities	200 800 400
	Expand teacher externships & professional development opportunities	*Increase # educators participating TE & college/career readiness professional development	# teachers in externships # educators participating in professional development	10 25
	Sustain employer engagement campaign	*Increase # of employers participating in Activities *Market program to community	#employers in career awareness #employers in exploration #employers in immersion activities	150 400 220
	Bridge skills gap between labor market needs and workforce	Know Labor Market Information (LMI)	Update Blueprint Needs assessment Explore Innovative models for mentoring, business resources & excellence centers	Update career sheets Develop LMI Fact sheets Business Resources Models for Mentoring

	Educate training providers on LMI needs	Aligning curriculum with sector needs	Host labor market session Provide LMI to 4 post-secondary trainers 2 media outlets #ITAs in critical industries	15 attend 4 trainers 2 media 65% ITAs	
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	Develop/enhance Healthcare sector training	Conduct assessment for healthcare Develop training for industry sector	Healthcare needs assessment to identify critical pathways # people trained and find employment	50 trained	
	Develop/enhance Manufacturing sector training	Conduct assessment for manufacturing Develop training for industry	Manufacturing needs assessment to identify pathway opportunities #people trained and find employment	25 trained	
Ensure continued success through evaluation and adherence to mandates	Evaluate work of the BCREB	Engage all Board members in 1 Committee Develop/implement community evaluation tool	Board engagement (22 Board members active) 5% community engagement	75% participation 5% community	
	Increase revenue for board operations	Identify and apply for funding opportunities	# grants applied for New resources	\$25K Add staff	
	Maintain effective collaborative partnerships	Participation on 1Berkshire Participation in Berkshire Chamber Participation in Berkshire Compact	75% participation Involvement in 1 activity/program BCREB integrated into economic development plans	75% participation	
	Complete REB Recertification process	Meet state/federal requirements	BCREB Certification	Certification & clean audit	

COVID RESPONSE	Road to reemployment for job seekers				
	Rapid Reemployment for companies				

Based on this, the FY 2019-2022 Strategic Plan continues our commitment to developing a continuum of strategies that addresses all segments of the workforce. The emerging workforce of in-school and out-of-school youth, the transitional workforce of unemployed and/or underemployed workers who need retraining and job search assistance to move into new jobs, and the incumbent workforce within our companies.

(6) Taking into account analyses described in 1 through 4 above, what is your regions strategy to work with the entities that carry out the core programs and required partners to align resources available to the local area, to achieve the strategic vision and goals described in paragraph (a)(5) of this section.

The Berkshire Workforce Board’s regional strategy is to continue to work with our myriad of workforce, economic, education, and community partners to implement a continuum of strategies to address all segments of the workforce. As the convener of the WIOA Partner’s MOU, we are charged with developing and delivering coordinated workforce development services.

(b) Under WIOA, the plan must include a description of the following requirements (WIOA secs. 108(b)(2)–(21)):

With a multi-agency WIOA partner umbrella MOU now in place, a bi-monthly meeting schedule, weekly team case management meetings, and strong leadership by the Career Center, we are delivering strategies to align and integrate resources and services that have become even more focused and valuable.

(1) Identify the following elements of the workforce development system in your local area:

(a) Programs that are included in your local workforce system (please list programs)

- **WIOA Title I (Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth)** - Berkshire Training and Employment, Inc., Department of Career Services and Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development
- **Title II (Adult Education and Family Literacy)** – Adult and Community Learning Services, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and Executive Office of Education
- **Title III (Wagner Peyser/Employment Service)** – Department of Career Services and Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development
- **Title IV (Vocational Rehabilitation)** – Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, Executive Office of Health and Human Services

- **Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)** - Department of Transitional Assistance, Executive Office of Health and Human Services
- **Federal-state unemployment compensation program** - Department of Unemployment Insurance (DUA), EOLWD
- **Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)** – part of DCS, EOLWD
- **Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG)** – part of DCS, EOLWD
- **Employment and Training Programs under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** part of DTA, EOHHS
- **Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)** – Title V of Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3056 et seq.)

Additional BCREB partners include:

- **Berkshire Community Action Council (BCAC)**
- **Vocational Education (McCann)**
- **Higher Education (Berkshire Community College)**
- **Berkshire Regional Housing**
- **Berkshire County Sheriff’s Office**
- **New England Farm Workers Council**

(b) How your Board will support the strategy identified in the State Plan and work with the entities carrying out core programs and other workforce development programs, including programs of study 3 authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.) to support service alignment;

The Berkshire Workforce Board supports the work of our core WIOA partners through the implementation and execution of our MOU with the partners. The MOU clearly indicates assurances that the BWB and our partners agree to conduct:

1. Participate in the operation of the one-stop delivery system consistent with the terms of this MOU, the requirements of WIOA, and the requirements of Federal laws authorizing the programs and activities.
2. Serve the “shared” customer as defined by the Partners with a focus on providing high quality, result orientated programming and outcomes.
3. Implement the One Stop Career Center customer flow and service practices across Partner agencies, including ensuring the accessibility and availability of services to “shared” customers.
4. Continue to research and utilize robust technology tools to scale-up practices and provide more significant supports for individuals with barriers to employment, including basic skills assessment, remediation, and career development tools.
5. Track and evaluate the outcomes for individuals who face barriers to employment.
6. Use a portion of the funds available for programs and activities to maintain the one-stop delivery system, including infrastructure and shared costs of one-stop centers, through methods agreed upon by the local board, chief elected official, and Partners.
7. Provide representation on the local workforce boards (as defined by BWB policy) to the extent possible and/or participate in local board ad hoc activities/events or on standing committees.
8. The MOU will be reviewed, and if substantial changes have occurred, renewed, not less

than once every 3-year period to ensure appropriate funding and delivery of services. The MOU must be updated to reflect any change in the one-stop partner infrastructure cost contributions.

In regards to support efforts under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, the Berkshire Workforce Board is an active part of our vocational schools' advisory committees, communicates with all of our college/career liaisons through our Connecting Activities programming, and provides 'Letters of Support' for program development, in particular for priority and critical industry sectors. The Pittsfield Public School's CVTE Associate Superintendent, McCann Technical School's Superintendent, and Berkshire Community College President have seats on the Workforce Board. In addition, staff from our area Career and Technical High Schools sit on the several of the sub committees as well as on our School to Career partnership.

(2) Please describe how your Board will work with entities carrying out core programs to:
(a) Expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment;

In addition to the bi-monthly partner meetings, weekly team case counseling meetings, and continuous advocacy through various community networks, the Berkshire Workforce Board and Career Center works with each core partner programs to understand specific educational and services needs of priority populations to ensure that all services are accessible to job seeker with barriers to employment. At each meeting, discussion revolves around priority areas, additional partners, customer strategies, business/employer strategies, technology, professional development and funding sources. Career center services, including workshops and level of support available for self-service resources have been made more accessible to adults with low reading and computer skill levels. Job search and placement services include strategies to support those who have never worked in our country and who may have credentials from other countries. Career Center staff have knowledge of current services available to people with physical, mental, and visual impairment, Veterans, and mature workers. Several core program staff are also available at the Career Center at designated times.

(b) Facilitate the development of career pathways and co-enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs; and

As Regional Partners continue to convene on a bi-monthly basis, a continuum of services continues to be outlined and reviewed. Most partners already have collaborative team meetings to assist mutual customers with their employment and training plans. Opportunities for career pathway and co-enrollment are always considered and advocated for.

- The Career Center provides collaborative space weekly for Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, Elder Services, Berkshire Community Action Council, and other organizations that assist in identifying shared customers and employment plans.
- Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) is located in the same building as the Career Center and they have weekly team meetings to review service strategies for mutual customers.

- Berkshire Community Action Council has been implementing a “Community Connector” referral process for the past few years which includes 30 regional agencies to communicate and connect regarding programs, services, and customers. We are in the process of developing a template for referrals and a tracking mechanism to ensure that we are aligning services for shared customers.
- Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) also has weekly team meetings at the Career Center to review employment plans of mutual clients. Exchange information on program eligibility, training guidelines, placement resources and seek additional areas in which to work together. MRC and the Career Center have already established mechanisms for and practice of cost-sharing on training for mutual clients (e.g. CDL training).
- MRC has initiated monthly meetings with Adult Learning Center staff to collaborate on employment planning for mutual clients. MRC counselors are scheduled to do on-site Job Readiness Workshops in Pittsfield and at MCLA in north county and BCC south county.
- Both the Career Center and MRC counselors provide quarterly outreach and orientation to Community Corrections at the Berkshire County House of Correction. Referrals are taken for clients approaching release. The Career Center provides job readiness workshops, and the MRC counselor has been trained by Sheriff’s Department for quarterly presentations at BCHOC. Berkshire Community College also provides in-house vocational training. Pittsfield Adult Learning Center staff often speaks with students prior to their release about transferring to their programs. Staff from DTA visit inmates and assist with applications for assistance upon release. Customers are regularly referred to the Adult Learning Center, the Career Center, BCAC, and Project Link at BCC.
- Berkshire Community College’s Office for Students with Disabilities has ongoing collaboration with MRC and the Career Center regarding academic accommodations. There is a referral process in place with the Navigator.
- Elder Services collaborates with MRC and the Career Center and have provided SEPAC presentations in both Pittsfield and North Adams. Shared customers are referred to their trainings, which has led to employment for a number of customers.

These are just a few examples of the continuum of services that are provided to shared customers and we will continue to determine the most effective and efficient way to track these.

(c) Improve access to activities leading to a recognized postsecondary credential (including a credential that is an industry-recognized certificate or certification, portable, and stackable);

Our strategy to improving access to recognized postsecondary credentials usually takes the form of using grants or private resources to start small pilot workshops and courses through our community college and/or vocational partners in strategic areas such as medical coding/billing, home health and nursing, introduction to manufacturing, and medical office management. Once there is participant and employer interest, we expand workshops into certificate programs, and in some cases into Associate Degree programs. In each case, credential development addressed a partner-identified training gap and an employer need, and every effort is made to create

credentials that are stackable and portable.

(3) Please describe the strategies and services that will be used in your local area:

(a) To facilitate engagement of businesses in workforce development programs, including small businesses and businesses in in-demand industry sectors and occupations;

Employers remain the backbone of our workforce efforts and are a vital link in any workforce development effort and with our regional economic prosperity. The Berkshire Workforce Board consists of 56% private sector leaders, comprised of 90% small and medium sized businesses, and representing our critical and emerging industries. They are our voice within the business community together with our strategic economic development, industry organizations, and business leaders. The Berkshire Workforce Board is affiliated with the Berkshire Business Roundtable, Berkshire Innovation Center, the Berkshire Chambers of Commerce, and the 1Berkshire economic development team. Through these long-standing relationships, we easily engage business leaders with our programming to provide valuable labor market trend data, to utilize their companies for placements for youth and adults, and to connect them to a variety of pipeline activities to enhance their workforce.

The Berkshire Workforce Board also works closely with the Career Center Business Services Team to engage businesses with our programs. We use a sector approach when working with employers to provide them opportunities to enhance their hiring, training, and retraining practices to promote economic and workforce growth.

The Berkshire Workforce Board piloted a new business initiative during FY21 where our goal was to meet with 1 new company each week to identify their workforce needs, including recruitment and retention. In the 1st 6 months, 74 companies were met with and a summary was compiled and shared with our education/training/community partners. The Career Center Business Representative has and will continue to participate in these employer meetings. We have secured additional resources to keep this project going, and already have engaged several new businesses with career center services. In addition, we have started a Human Resource Networking group which convenes monthly to address employment-related topics.

The Berkshire Skills Cabinet initiative has helped to attract additional companies to our workforce network as well and we will capitalize on their energy. The majority of establishments in the Berkshires are small businesses, and in-demand sectors receive high priority for program development or business engagement.

(b) To serve agricultural businesses and how you intend to improve those services;

Food and agriculture consist of the growing, distributing, processing, and consumption of food. In the Berkshires, this includes the clustering of farms, value-added farm products, restaurants, food services for major institutions, and food vendors. The businesses range from large fruit and vegetable producers to farm-to-table restaurants, specialty retail shops, large and small grocery stores, canning and food processors, and product distribution firms. Other local industries are closely associated, depend on, and converge with the economic activity of the Food and

Agriculture industry in the Berkshires. The Food and Agriculture cluster employs over 8,900 people in the Berkshires, with a sold market value of goods exceeding \$22 million annually. With strong growth in retail and dining operations, as well as the expansion of existing and emergence of new farming operations, this cluster has been a positive driver in cross-cluster convergence; overlapping with hospitality and tourism, and healthcare to name two examples. Although agricultural businesses are not a priority or critical industry in our region, we do have a concentrated group of farmers and growers in our region who we will reach out to and explore developing strategies to create collaborations and partnerships that will respond to their workforce needs to help them remain relevant and competitive.

(c) To support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in your area;

Key to meeting the needs of businesses is engaging them in our workforce system and connecting them to specific programs that meet their acute and long-term employment and training needs. The Berkshire Career Center Charter provides technical guidance and financial resource to implement a strategic, coordinated, and integrated demand driven response to matching job seekers to career pathway employment opportunities. The Berkshire Career Center works with the Berkshire Workforce Board to align employer activities and to assist with their retention and recruitment needs. Monthly labor market dashboards are posted on the workforce board website to keep the community informed of businesses needs and changes.

(d) To better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development;

The Berkshire Workforce Board has been very active and is integrated into most regional economic development efforts ranging from the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission's CEDS 2021 report to assisting town managers with companies in transition (growth or reduction) to 1Berkshires' update of the Berkshire Blueprint 2.0 economic strategy for the Berkshires. The Workforce Board director is one of the founding members of a regional "Practitioner's Group" which consists of regional planners, MOBD, chambers of commerce, SBA, Mass Development, town leaders, and business representatives who convene quarterly to discuss upcoming resources and opportunities. We keep each other informed of items on the horizon in order to proactively address issues.

Our CEO and The Mayor of Pittsfield has commissioned a "Red Carpet Team" 4 years ago which consists of economic and workforce professionals who meet with potential companies that are interested in the region. The Workforce Board Director actively participates and provides labor market data, workforce resources, and monthly fact sheets to both mayors to assist in their recruitment efforts. Most recently we were able to secure a new company in Pittsfield which created 300 jobs in 2019 and assisted a long-standing company in North Adams in securing resources for an expansion that will grow their workforce by 25. The Berkshire Workforce Board is looked to as the main workforce resource for the region and is often asked to participate in various committees, focus groups, and activities that help grow the economy.

(e) To strengthen linkages between the Career Center delivery system and unemployment insurance programs;

Unemployment insurance staff is located at the Berkshire Career Center to help facilitate the linkages between UI services, RESEA program, and career center services. The Career Center has redesigned its customer flow to ensure integration of partner programs and to ensure customers have access to all programs that might be of assistance to their needs.

(f) Describe how your Board will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out in the local area with statewide rapid response activities.

When the Berkshire Workforce Board and/or Career Center are formally or informally notified about a potential closing or layoff, contacts are made to the others parties to ensure all are informed. The Workforce Board will also notify the Chief Elected Officials of the layoff or plant closing. Rapid Response activities are initiated by the Rapid Response Team and coordinated with the Board and Career Center. Rapid Response will schedule a meeting with the employer and provide information regarding initial employer contact, date of layoff, assist affected dislocated workers, investigate possible layoff aversion strategies, determine labor union involvement, provide company with services and request the scheduling of on-site company meetings.

A plan is put in place coordinated among the Board, Career Center and Rapid Response Team. The plan may include information/registration sessions at the career center, methods of outreach, listings of impacted persons to contact, and specifics on grant resources available (Formula, TRADE, NDWG) and time frames. In addition, the RR team informs the dislocated worker the process for UI claim, section 30, severance packages, job search workshops, educational or vocational training caps, and services available at the OSCC. The RR team and OSCC's coordinate the MOSES & TRADE data entry information obtained from dislocated workers at employee meetings and provides guidance to the employer and/or employees on how to file a TRADE Petition, if applicable.

Contact is made with representatives of Rapid Response, as well as responding to requests for assistance from it. The Rapid Response staff and Career Center staff both attend the BizWorks meetings. Information and best practices are shared regarding regional layoffs, recruitments, and closings. Career Centers and RR staff have hosted Regional BizWorks meetings including other state agencies.

(g) Describe procedures to offer Career Center Business Services and Mass BizWorks programs to local businesses

The Workforce Board staff coordinates with Career Center staff on business outreach to create awareness of Career Center and Workforce Board Business Services. The Workforce Board Director has a monthly column in the Berkshire Eagle which reaches 25,000 households; has a "Workforce Wednesday" on social media that highlights workforce programming every Wednesday; and produces a weekly update (to approximately 250 organizations) to keep the community informed for workforce services. This is part of our strategy to educate and inform the community about the business services that are provided.

Our local Business Services Team (consisting of the Career Center Business Representative, the

Workforce Board Director, our Industry Training Consultant, and our Talent Alignment Specialists) meets with employers, conducts a needs assessment, and creates a business service plan designed to target those needs. The Biz Team often collaborates with the Career Services team on customized recruitment services, and opportunities for businesses to participate in job fairs throughout the year. Our goal is to connect with a new company every week to help attract new companies to the workforce system.

The Berkshire Career Center and Workforce Board collaborate on specialize projects that target a priority sector, such as the Advanced Manufacturing Initiative where a member of the Business Services Team collaborated with workforce board staff on business outreach, curriculum development, training participants, and training placements for a manufacturing/machine operators training.

The Career Center is in frequent contact with MA BizWorks staff and attends monthly regional meetings. The Team is notified by Rapid Response staff whenever a local company experiences a large layoff or closure. Conversely, the Team, through daily review of newspapers/publications, workforce meetings, etc., informs Rapid Response of like activity. Recruitment assistance is offered for large scale layoffs. The Career Center and Workforce Board discuss collaborative training workshops for companies and host Workforce Training Fund overview, employment law sessions, and an introduction to career center services workshops for employers.

(h) That may include the implementation of initiatives such as incumbent worker training programs, on-the-job training programs, customized training programs, industry and sector strategies, career pathways initiatives, utilization of effective business intermediaries, and other business services and strategies designed to meet the needs of regional businesses. These initiatives must support the strategy described in paragraph (b)(3) of this section;

The Berkshire Workforce Board has been the catalyst and convener of incumbent worker training in the region for the past 20 years and started the Berkshire Plastics Network, then Berkshire Paper Industry Alliance which merged and formed the Berkshire Applied Technology Council and is now the Berkshire Innovation Center which has been responsible for generating millions of dollars for incumbent worker training for thousands of workers in manufacturing, leadership, and technology. The Board is in constant communication with business intermediaries and meets with local education/training providers on a regular basis to identify gaps in skill development, researches grant opportunities, and develops/implements customized training opportunities as they arise. The Board and Career Center also assist companies in accessing the Workforce Training Fund to upgrade the skills of more 9,000 workers within 120 companies. Although the Berkshires are only 1.8% of the state population, Berkshire companies have received 2.1% of the WTFP resources.

The Berkshire Workforce Board and Career Center work with a variety of business intermediaries including staffing and temp agencies, workforce representatives at our partner agencies, and employment counselors throughout the region to seek ways to better assist mutual customers. As noted above, there is a quarterly meeting of economic practitioners which includes Mass Office of Business Development, Community Development Corporations, town

managers, economic councils, Berkshire Regional Planning, 1Berkshire and others. Our intent is to identify common goals and mutual ways to work collaboratively to achieve them. The Workforce Board and Career Center are active members of all Chambers of Commerce in our area, MassMEP, Associated Industries of Massachusetts, Berkshire Compact and Berkshire STEM, and assist them in implementing an annual career and education fair, identify training opportunities, and often participate in workforce visits or employer consultations. The statewide Demand Driven 2.0 and Mass BizWorks strategies are imbedded in the offering of business services to employers.

The Berkshire Career Center has had great success implementing on-the-job training programs for our small companies as well and has worked with more than 20 companies, saving them \$400,000 in resources.

(4) Please provide an examination of how your Board will:

- Coordinate local workforce investment activities with regional economic development activities that are carried out in the local area
- Promote entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services;

In addition to what was outlined earlier, through the Berkshire Practitioner's group, the Berkshire Workforce Board actively connects with regional economic development activities that include the Small Business Development Corporation which provides one-on-one assistance to local startups; Berkshire Community College's Berkshire Enterprises program which provides monthly breakfast meetings to help entrepreneurs with their needs; EforAll entrepreneurial programs, Lever's incubators and microenterprises services, and 1Berkshire with their Berkshire Starts program, Business Boot Camp, mentoring program, and entrepreneurial meet ups which help them identify essential elements involved with successfully starting and growing a business venture.

(5) Please describe the Career Center system in your area, including:

(i) How your Board will ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers through the system and that such providers will meet the employment needs of local businesses, workers and job seekers;

The Berkshire Workforce Board follows the State's Policy for Initial and Subsequent Eligibility for approving eligible training providers and placing them on the Eligible Training Provider List. Verifiable performance in the areas of Training Completions Rate, Entered Employment/Placement Rate, and Placement Wage are supplied by the Provider and must meet minimum standards. Additionally, when determining Subsequent Eligibility, the Berkshire Workforce Board's Evaluation Committee reviews the performance of these providers as it relates specifically to the participants we have funded through various sources. Should a vendor fail to meet the minimum standards for this specific cohort, Subsequent Eligibility may be impacted.

The Berkshire Career Center also collects feedback from training participants regarding the programs they have participated in to determine the quality of instruction they believe they have received. Additionally, the Board convenes sector based initiatives that solicit feedback on the experiences of Employers hiring individuals who have completed Occupational Training. Typically training providers are involved in these initiatives and receive feedback relating to the

effectiveness of their curriculum.

(ii) How your Board will facilitate access to services provided through the Career Center system, including in remote areas, through the use of technology and other means;

COVID-19 has provided an opportunity to refine the Career Center's virtual offerings. All services have been virtual since April 2020 and a graduate return to in-person services will commence in August 2021. Career Center Seminars, workshops, counseling, job clubs, etc. have all been provided on a virtual platform which we anticipate will continue for the near future.

Access to services provided through the Career Center delivery system is enabled through a variety of access points. On-site access is available at the Career Center which is located on public transportation routes and offer services between 8AM-4PM Monday through Friday. The Center has developed their web access functionality to enable both Job seekers and employers the ability to access services electronically. Examples include an on-line Youth Job Fair, a library of computer and job search webinars, and the ability to search and post job orders via the internet. Staff also provides services in locations other than the One Stop facility through job fairs, recruiting for Training Programs, visits to local High Schools as well as teleconferencing capabilities. Additionally, social media (Facebook, LinkedIn and texting) are utilized to inform both Jobseeker and Business customers about events and programs that might be of interest to them.

(iii) How entities within the Career Center system, including Career Center operators and partners, will comply with WIOA sec. 188, if applicable, and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities, including providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities;

Career Center programs are both physically, technically, and programmatically accessible for customers with disabilities. Career Center facilities are all physically accessible with dedicated handicap parking, wheelchair ramps, elevators, Braille signs, and automatic doors. The Career Center has invested in adaptive technology including: adjustable computer tables and chairs, video phone, TTY, adapted computer screens and mice, and onsite wheelchairs. Berkshire Career Center makes every effort to provide reasonable accommodation to ensure programmatic accessibility on an as needed basis including: language interpretation, intake documents and information sheets in Spanish, information sheets in other languages as provided by the State, adapted written materials for visually impaired (such as large print, audio assist), sign interpretation, and space for service animals, and staff assistance in completing application forms.

The Berkshire Career Center has a Disabilities Resource Coordinator who provides individualized counseling and employment services for Career Center customers with disabilities as an employment barrier. The Coordinator also provides barrier assessment, career counseling, benefits counseling, job matching, job development, and follow up employment assistance.

The Career Center completes periodic physical accessibility self-assessments to continuously improve accessibility in the Career Centers and works closely with partner agencies servicing customers with accessibility needs including MRC, MCB, and ESOL programs to ensure coordinated service for shared customers and to ensure the highest level of service is available to meet the individual needs of each customer.

(iv) The roles and resource contributions of your partners – how are these relationships sustained and kept productive;

The roles and resource contributions are all listed in the WIOA Partner MOU and signed by partners each year. All infrastructure funding decisions are made at the state level, however the Berkshire Workforce Board oversees the budget to ensure that all allocations are incorporated into the local integrated budget. These budget amounts are shared at the local level with our partners to foster discussion and receive feedback on creative programming that can take place to benefit the customer and positive outcomes. Bi-monthly meetings also help to facilitate productive communication and proactive planning and programming.

(6) Please provide a description and assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in your local area.

The Berkshire Career Center is the hub of employment and Training activities for adult and dislocated workers in Berkshire County. The core of these services offered at the Career Center include:

Self Service/Universal Access:

There is universal access to Employment Services involving self-help. Unregistered services include self-help or other unassisted basic career services not tailored to specific needs or basic information, including: self-service, facilitated self-help, job listings, Labor Market Information (LMI), labor exchange services, and Information about other services.

Basic Career Services:

- WIOA eligibility,
- outreach/intake orientation to information registration,
- job search assistance,
- initial assessment of skills level & gaps, and
- provisions of information on English language acquisition and integrated education and training programs, support services, aptitudes and other services available at the one-stop delivery system.

Labor Exchange Services:

- job search and placement assistance,
- career counseling,
- information on in-demand industry sectors and occupations including information on nontraditional employment,

- appropriate business/employer recruitment,
- coordination of referrals/activities with Core Partners and other agencies
- delivery of local, regional and national labor market information,
- provision of information on eligible training vendor's performance, cost, and training services by type of program and provider,
- provision of information, in usable and understandable formats and languages, about how the local area is performing on local performance information relating to the one-stop delivery system, and
- provision of information and assistance regarding filing claims for unemployment compensation, by which the Career Center must provide meaningful assistance to individuals seeking assistance in filing a claim for unemployment compensation.

Individualized Career Services:

- comprehensive and specialized assessments of skill levels and service needs,
- identification of employment barriers,
- selection of career path and/or training, which will lead to employment,
- development of an Individual Employment Plan (IEP) to identify career planning, employment goals, barriers, skills gaps, and training needs,
- internships,
- paid or unpaid work experience,
- financial literacy services and develop short term essential skills needed to obtain employment.
- Short-term prevocational or employment services can be provided in a group setting, individual one-on-one counseling, attending specific workshops and other professional conduct service to prepare individuals to successfully transition into the completion of post-secondary education, or training or unsubsidized employment.

Referral to Training Services:

Training services are provided to equip individuals to enter the workforce and retain employment. Training may be made available to individuals after an interview, assessment, or evaluation resulting in a determination that the individual requires training to obtain employment or to remain employed. Training services may be made available to either an employed, unemployed or dislocated worker who is unable to retain employment that leads to economic self-sufficiency. A customer must be determined that they possess the skills and qualifications to participate in training services. Training is to meet the customer's needs, not wants. Customer must exhaust all other grant sources to pay for training including Federal Pell grants before utilizing WIOA Title I funds. Training services may include the following:

- occupational skills training, including training for nontraditional employment,
- on-the-job training,
- registered apprenticeships,
- incumbent worker training,
- programs that combine workplace training with related instruction, which may include cooperative education programs,
- training programs operated by the private sector,

- skill upgrading and retraining,
- entrepreneurial training programs that assist qualified unemployed individuals who are seriously interested in starting a business and becoming self-employed,
- transitional jobs training, which is time-limited work experiences that are subsidized and are in the public, private, or non-profit sectors for individuals with barriers to employment, who are chronically unemployed and/or have an inconsistent work history, combined with comprehensive employment and support services.

In most circumstances, an individual will receive training services through an individual training account (“ITA”). The selection of a training program should be fully informed by the performance of relevant training providers and individuals must be provided with performance for all training providers who provide a relevant program.

Follow-up Services:

Follow-up services must be provided for up to 12 months after the first day of employment, as appropriate, for participants enrolled in WIOA adult or dislocated worker workforce activities that are placed in unsubsidized employment. Follow-up services must be made available, however, some adults and dislocated workers who are registered and placed into unsubsidized employment may not require or want such services. Follow-up services could include, but are not limited to, additional career planning and counseling, and director intervention with the participant’s employer.

Employer Services:

WIOA emphasizes Employer Services as an integral part of a demand driven system. As such, the Berkshire Workforce Board identifies the provision of Employer Services as a core component of the Career Center service delivery system. The Career Center’s coordinated business Service team provides Employer Services to all employers, covering wide ranges of size, industry, location and requirements, and will have the ability to identify and meet the needs of all employers. The Berkshire Business Services Team follows a framework in developing and implementing all strategic planning, process development, and allocation of staff and staff resources that pertain to the provision of Employer Services.

(7) Please provide a description and assessment of the type and availability of youth workforce investment activities in your area including activities for youth who are individuals with disabilities, which must include an identification of successful models of such activities. a. Please also provide a description of youth workforce investment activity coordination with the Department of Transitional Assistance, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, and Massachusetts Commission for the Blind.

Youth investment activities in the Berkshires are open to ALL youth, regardless of disabilities and all three of these agencies are considered partners to the Berkshire Workforce Board and Career Center and all provide youth referrals to our programs.

In the Berkshire Workforce Board’s strategic plan, one priority area is college/career readiness programming in which we commit to improving and expanding successful models of workforce

programs and services for youth, especially older youth who need basic skills development, English language proficiency and employment. The Board engages community partners in collaborations that will align youth services and result in a more coordinated system of youth development; expands and improves youth work readiness services and internships, and works with our Career Center services to meet the unique employability needs of our youth.

WIOA Youth Services Berkshire Career Center provides oversight and program administration for WIOA Youth services currently contracted by the Berkshire Workforce Board. WIOA Youth services young people ages 14-22 who meet WIOA eligibility requirements. The program focus is to assist youth with a variety of barriers to create goals as outlined within their Individual Service Strategy Plan (ISS), and to achieve education and occupation credentials that will help them attain empowered employment as they transition into adulthood. The WIOA Youth Program consists of an array of services to meet the mandated WIOA elements including: Career Exploration/Counseling, Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling, Career Pathway Exploration, Job Readiness Training, Financial Education, Mentoring, Leadership Development, Peer Inclusion programs and Guided Transitions to Secondary and Post-Secondary education opportunities, and Supportive Services. To promote wrap around services, referrals are made to agencies such as local charities and food banks, our literacy providers, Berkshire Community College, New England Farm Workers Association, Berkshire Community Action Council and the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC).

Supportive Services are essential to the success of youth who face barriers in transportation, child care and other challenges presented due to living in rural poverty. When funding allows, the program helps youth to obtain a Driver's license, access to child care, winter coats, and school supplies, in order to support participation in the program and youth independence.

The Youth Program includes successful participation in subsidized work experiences in various industry sectors ranging from retail and tourism to technology to local non-profit agencies. The program has a good success rate in retaining employment in both the 2nd and 4th quarter after exit, along with helping youth gain credentials beyond secondary education.

Barriers specific to our rural region for which the program is continuously seeking solutions include:

- Post-secondary degrees take longer to achieve because youth are not able to attend college full-time due to restraints in transportation, sustainable housing, child care and the need to be employed at least part-time while attending college.
- Apprenticeships and Occupational Trainings due to limited training options in the region and lack of transportation to long distance training sites.

WIOA Youth collaborations with DTA and MRC collaborations include:

- Youth can be co-enrolled in both WIOA Youth and DTA services through participation in the Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES) program and the Work Participation Program (WPP) through the Career Center.
- Youth with mental, physical and emotional disabilities have access to working with the Disability Services Coordinator at the Career Center and are regularly referred to MRC to ensure their special needs are being met when conducting Career Pathway and Job Search

activities.

- MRC collaborations for in school youth includes co-enrollment in the Pre-Employment Trainings Services (Pre-ETS) that assist youth ages 14-22 with disabilities and/or IEPs by providing job exploration counseling, work based learning experiences, workplace readiness and instruction on self-advocacy. If youth are not eligible for the Pre-ETS program, they may still receive general services through MRC to assist with employment readiness.

(8) Please explain how your Local Board will coordinate relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs and activities with education and workforce investment activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services.

Our youth who are our emerging workforce are incredibly important to our current and future economy and to the Berkshire community. At the same time the challenges faced by teens and young adults continue to become more complex and challenging. This reality led to the continuation of the Berkshire Youth Council working in collaboration with the Career Center, K-12 providers, community based organizations and employers on a quarterly basis. We strive to ensure that each youth receives the services they need to move successfully into the labor market, and to move forward with their education and work experience into solid and informed career choices. Our goal is to provide seamless services for all youth to better prepare them to enter the workforce and postsecondary education, regardless of funding source. Due to our staff's team approach to working with youth, there is little possibility for duplication of services as youth data is clearly tracked and efforts are recorded, so that youth are not receiving similar services from various staff members. Below is a summary of some of these efforts.

Connecting Activities – Connecting Activities (CA) is a Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) initiative that leverages a statewide infrastructure to support "college and career readiness" for all students. The CA line item in the state budget establishes public-private partnerships through the 16 local workforce investment boards to connect schools and businesses by providing *structured work-based learning experiences* for students that support both their academic and employability skill attainment. In Berkshire County, the Board has been implementing School-to-Work activities since 1991 which eventually became known as Connecting Activities in 1998 within the educational system. All 11 public school districts participate in a myriad of college/career readiness activities and all educational year-round programs with integrated career readiness components fall under the CA umbrella. Schools continuously develop college and career centers and teams to continue to strengthen vital partnerships with the Berkshire business community in providing career readiness opportunities to ALL youth. Each year the Berkshire Workforce Board and our partners assist 1,500 youth with career awareness, 2,500 youth in career exploration, and 500 youth in career immersion activities. Below is a sampling of some K-12 activities.

Career Awareness <i>Becoming 'aware' of potential careers</i> <i>Begin in K- grade 6</i>	Career Exploration <i>'Exploring' career interest areas & career readiness</i> <i>Begin grades 7-8</i>	Career Immersion <i>Learning the specifics skills & knowledge within a career pathway area; Begin in High School</i>
<i>Career Interest Assessments</i> <i>Career Speakers</i> <i>Career Days / Career Fairs</i> <i>College & Career Plans (CCP) / Individual Learning Plans (ILP)</i> <i>Company Tours / Field Trips</i> <i>Labor Market Information</i> <u>Regional Examples</u> <i>STEM Career Fair</i> <i>Compact Regional 8th Grade Career Fairs</i> <i>School-based Career Fairs</i> <i>1Berkshire Youth Leadership Program</i> <i>Pittsfield Academy Program Bus Tours</i> <i>Drury College & Career Center Speakers</i> <i>Multi-district College & Career Plan use & Career Research Activities</i>	<i>Career Exploration Classes</i> <i>Career Focused Elective Courses</i> <i>Job Shadowing</i> <i>Community Service Learning</i> <i>Individual Career Guidance</i> <i>Informational Interviews</i> <i>Workshops / Presentations</i> <i>(work readiness, financial literacy, etc.)</i> <u>Regional Examples</u> <i>Berkshire Job Shadow Day</i> <i>BART Charter College & Career Ready Skills Course</i> <i>North Adams & Central Berkshire Schools Service Learning Projects</i> <i>Mt. Everett Resume Writing & Interview Skills Training</i> <i>Pittsfield Schools & McCann Tech Skills USA Program</i> <i>Berkshire Robotics Challenge</i> <i>Multi-district work readiness trainings</i> <i>Multi-district Career Pathway Courses</i> <i>Drury & Lee College & Career Centers</i>	<i>Work-Based-Learning (Internships, Structured Work Experiences)</i> <i>Capstone / Senior Project</i> <i>Career Clubs</i> <i>Entrepreneurial Programs</i> <i>Mentor Programs</i> <i>Skills Portfolios</i> <i>Career Specific Courses with Field Experience</i> <u>Regional Examples</u> <i>Berkshire County high school internship models</i> <i>Specialized year-round work experience programs</i> <i>Mt. Greylock, BART, Drury Senior Capstone Projects</i> <i>CVTE / Vocational Programs</i> <i>Pittsfield Schools Academy Mentor Program</i> <i>BART Gateway Portfolio Project</i> <i>Multi-district Career Clubs</i>

Local examples provided above represent a sampling of the Career Readiness activities and programs offered to Berkshire County youth. A wide range (200+) of career awareness, exploration and immersion offerings are provided to students throughout the region on an annual basis with the number of these activities / programs expanding each year.

YouthWorks – Also funded by the Commonwealth, YouthWorks is now offered in the summer and during the school year and places low-income youth in part-time, subsidized jobs in local public and non-profit organizations across the region. Youth also receive intensive training and other supports to remain successfully employed, and to prepare for unsubsidized employment in the private sector, the ultimate goal of the program. The program requires that 90% of students must reside in Pittsfield. The remaining slots can be used in any other community. This grant serves approximately 50 youth annually, and all enrolled teens receive 125 hours of a paid work experience at above minimum wage, as well as 25 hours of workshops and training in topics such as OSHA/Workplace Safety, Financial Management, Interviewing Skills, Dress for Success, and Workplace Etiquette and Keeping a Job.

Jobs4Youth – For several years, the Berkshire Workforce Board has operated a summer jobs program called Jobs4Youth. This initiative began in 2013, and was in response to the incredible demand for summer jobs on the part of students, their families, and educators in the City of North Adams which is not eligible for YouthWorks resources. Companies are asked to hire teens – or to provide financial support for a teen to have an enriching, paid summer work experience within a field related to their career interests. The funding generated through the Jobs4Youth initiative allows the Berkshire Workforce Board to continually implement a Youth Works Summer Program for North County eligible youth ages 14-21 (10-15 youth annually) and provides them with structured work readiness training and summer work experiences.

Summer Academy – Collaboration with Berkshire Community College, Berkshire Workforce Board, Berkshire Career Center, and Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts for summer internships for high school juniors and seniors who are part of an academic enhancement summer program.

Berkshire Business Interns – Due to our robust middle/high school internships, the Berkshire Workforce Board was often contacted to assist with college internships for both local students and for summer internships for those attending local colleges. As a strategy, the Berkshire Workforce Board has been working with Lever, Inc. in North Adams over the past 2 years to develop a college internship program. During the summer of 2018, Lever piloted the first college internship program – Berkshire Business Interns - for the region by placing 30 college students in a 10-week, business-paid internship. There was an employer orientation, youth orientation, and summer long support and access to local events. The BWB will continue to support and grow this important project.

STEM Activities – Berkshire Workforce Board partners with the Berkshire County STEM Network to provide a series of STEM activities to engage young people to pursue careers in STEM-related fields. Activities range for pre-K to college students and include open houses at public libraries, General Dynamics Engineering Expo, MCLA CSI Atrium, Regional Science Fairs, STEM pathway development, STEM Teacher Externships, STEAM Challenges, STEM Starter Academies, and Robotics Challenges. Annually 1,500 youth are exposed to STEM activities.

Compact for Education & Positive Youth Development Impact Council - The BWB serves as the Career Readiness regional ‘liaison’ on the Berkshire Compact for Education and the Berkshire United Way’s Positive Youth Development Impact Council. These regional networks have prioritized the importance of career readiness exposure for ALL Berkshire County youth. Therefore, these networks are assisting the BWB in providing the necessary supports, resources and advocacy to further enhance the school districts Career Readiness Models resulting in students having the necessary career readiness exposure and development before graduating from high school.

Amp It Up – Funded through Mass Development, this program strives to bring schools and manufacturing companies together to help middle and high school students understand the career opportunities in STEM and manufacturing fields and to increase the number of students who choose careers and majors in these areas. Through Amp It Up, middle or high school teachers spend one day in a manufacturing environment with manufacturing professionals learning what happens within the company and drawing a connection between what educators are teaching and how it is used in the manufacturing process. Teachers spend time before and after this experience working as a team with a consultant, reviewing their curriculum, exploring its possible use in manufacturing, and then, based on their experiences, building classroom activities and lesson plans that bring the curriculum alive for their students. To date we have set 46 teachers out on externships.

(9) How will your Board coordinate WIOA title I workforce investment activities with the provision of transportation and other appropriate supportive services in the local area? Please also describe how other programs and services in your local area are leveraged to compliant workforce investment activities.

The Berkshire Workforce Board Title I Support Services Policy and Procedures, and our Integrated Budget, as submitted and reviewed by MassHire DCS, provides for the provision of transportation and other required supportive services to Title I enrollees following a process to document the need for such support service. Due to the limited number of accessible training vendors and the limits of rural public transportation, many of the Career Center adult and dislocated worker trainees have limited to no access to transportation services or travel a great distance to receive appropriate training services

We also partner with several community-based organizations such as the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority, Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA), and Berkshire Community Action Program that provides various support and wraparound services and make referrals between our funded programs and those entities to leverage and complement our Title I resources. Career Center staff is able to provide our customers with information about various reduced fare transportation options as well. For youth in our area, we work with our WIOA vendors as well as multiple partners in the community to provide supports as needed to ensure a youth's success.

(10) What plans, assurances, and strategies do you have in place for maximizing coordination, improving service delivery, and avoiding duplication of Wagner-Peyser Act (29 U.S.C. 49 et seq.) services and other services provided through the Career Center delivery system?

The Berkshire Career Center staff makes services seamless to any customer of the center. The Reception/Front desk staff assess (walk-in) customer needs on their first visit to the Career Center, identifying priority customers; e.g. Veterans, MSFW, individuals with disabilities, ex-offenders, etc., for priority referral. Information on Career Center services and programs is provided, as is instruction on Career Center membership and JobQuest registration. Customers are encouraged to use the Resource Room for job search/application, resume writing, labor market data research, and profile completion; e.g. JobQuest, LinkedIn, etc. Customers are encouraged by both front desk staff and counselors to register for and participate in job readiness workshops, employer events, and program orientations.

For targeted UI recipients, RESEA (Re-Employment) staff review areas of need and recommend appropriate services at the Initial RESEA Review. During this meeting, customer needs and goals are recorded on the Career Action Plan (CAP) as are those Career Center activities and services of interest to the customer. Further discussion of and registration for Career Center services takes place during the final RESEA Review. As per program requirements, all enrollees are registered for a follow-up service, ensuring a repeat visit and further awareness of Wagner Peyser/labor exchange activities available. Participants are offered assistance with job search/application, occupational research, and assessments.

Career Services Staff has developed a customer coordination team process which is evolving towards a collaborative approach involving key program staff who meet as a team to review the needs, employment goals, and qualifications of a customer to jointly develop an action plan for service delivery and to conduct job matching. Areas of need are identified and services provided accordingly; e.g. meetings with respective program staff, registration for workshop and/or program orientation, skills assessment, etc.

(11) How will career and training services, required under WIOA, be provided to Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFWs) through the Career Center(s)?

Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFWs) are a priority customer at the Berkshire Career Center and signage is posted in English and Spanish on the front desk to help identify customers. The reception desk greeting includes an initial inquiry regarding “are you a seasonal farmworker?” Once identified, a MSFW would be given information specific to their specific needs, just as someone with a disability, or a veteran. All customers who acknowledge this status are provided with a dedicated MSFW Employment Counselor. Language assistance is offered to walk-ins who are not English proficient.

The Career Center Services Orientation PowerPoint presentation details the MSFW process. All persons coming into the centers receive access to all of the same resources, referrals, and services under “Universal Access.” During the Orientation/Career Center Seminar, customers learn about all the training programs and services available, and a slide also describes the definitions of Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers/Food Processors. All staff members are trained in the importance of MSFW service delivery annually.

(12) How will the Board coordinate WIOA title I workforce investment activities with adult education and literacy activities under WIOA title II? This 6 description must include how the Board will carry out the review of local applications submitted under title II consistent with WIOA secs. 107(d)(11)(A) and (B)(i) and WIOA sec. 232: Each eligible provider desiring a grant or contract from an eligible agency shall submit an application to the eligible agency containing such information and assurances as the eligible agency may require, including a description of – i. of how funds awarded under this title will be spent consistent with the requirements of this title; ii. any cooperative arrangements the eligible provider has with other agencies, institutions, or organizations for the delivery of adult education and literacy activities; iii. how the eligible provider will provide services in alignment with the local plan under section 108, including how such provider will promote concurrent enrollment in programs and activities under title I, as appropriate; iv. how the eligible provider will meet the State adjusted levels of performance described in section 116(b)(3), including how such provider will collect data to report on such performance indicators; v. how the eligible provider will fulfill Career Center partner responsibilities as described in section 121(b)(1)(A), as appropriate; vi. how the eligible provider will provide services in a manner that meets the needs of eligible individuals; and vii. information that addresses the considerations described under section 231(e), as applicable.

The Berkshire Workforce Board and Berkshire Career Center staff works with state funded adult education programs in the following areas:

- Participation in the review of adult education proposals for funding for consistency and compliance with state and federal guidelines.
- Participation in program quality reviews/monitoring and selected site visits.
- Development of effective employer partnerships to place adult education graduates.
- Provide training and information for adult education staff on current trends in the labor market and facilitate opportunities for additional occupational skills training.
- Support and guidance to adult education programs related to the development of viable career pathways for adult learners.
- Support and guidance to adult education programs in serving shared customers.
- Support and guidance to the adult education staff located at the Career Center.
- Participation in quarterly Berkshire County adult literacy providers in the region.

(13) Please provide the name and contact information of your Fiscal Agent.

Melanie Gelaznik, Berkshire Training & Employment, Inc. (BTE) and MassHire Berkshire Career Center, 160 North Street, 3rd floor, Pittsfield, MA 01201. (413) 499-2220
mgelaznik@masshireberkshirecc.com.

(14) Please detail the competitive process that will be used to award the sub grants and contracts for WIOA title I activities.

The Berkshire Workforce Board follows its approved Procurement & Contracting Policies and Procedures as outlined in MA Issuance 100 DCS 01.102 (and any subsequent updates to this issuance) and as a non-profit organization for WIOA Title I activities. We procure WIOA Youth Providers annually, and One Stop Career Center Operator, every four years.

A subcommittee of the Workforce Board is convened to establish the process and timeline of review of the One-Stop Operator Procurement which is then submitted and approved or amended by the Board. The subcommittee then meets to discuss and review the parameters and components of the Request for Proposal (RFP). Once a draft of the RFP is established, the subcommittee meets with the Department of Career Services (DCS) for guidance and review. A final version of the RFP is submitted and approved or amended by the Board and then published with public notices sent out. A Bidders Conference is held two weeks after the RFP is released with the questions and answers from the Bidders Conference published on the Berkshire Workforce Board website one week later. A voluntary Letter of Intent to Bid can be submitted by all applicants prior to submission of their proposals. The bid proposals must be submitted in sealed envelopes approximately 12 weeks from the release date. The subcommittee reviews and scores all proposals and submits their recommendation to the Board for approval. Once the Board approves the provider, there is an approximate 8-week appeals period, if needed. Contract negotiations begin after the appeals period ends and the contract is executed within 6 weeks of the end of the appeals period.

(15) Please provide the local levels of performance negotiated with the Governor and chief elected official consistent with WIOA sec. 116(c), to be used to measure the performance of your local area and to be used by the Local Board for measuring the performance of your local fiscal

agent (where appropriate), eligible providers under WIOA title I subtitle B, and the Career Center system in the local area. Local Boards may insert or provide a link to requested performance goals.

Based on historical data and performance over the past 3 years, the Berkshires requested lower than state goals for WIOA Adult Employment Q2 & Q4 and Credential rate; and WIOA youth Employment/Education Q2 & Q4 and Credential rate. The State countered with slightly higher goals and we accepted.

WIOA - LOCAL AREA FY2021 PROPOSED PERFORMANCE GOALS REQUEST FORM---MDCS RESPONSE				
CONTACT PERSON / EMAIL:	Heathe Boulger Heather@masshireberkshire.com			
WORKFORCE BOARD NAME:	Berkshire			
A	See MDCS proposed local goal in bold red.			
PERFORMANCE MEASURE	STATE		LOCAL AREA	
	B FY 2021 STATE GOAL	C FY 2021 STATE GOAL	D FY2021 PROPOSED LOCAL GOAL	E FY 2021 Approved LOCAL GOAL
WIOA ADULT MEASURES				
Employment Q2	86.5%	75.0%	75.0%	75%
Employment Q4	78.0%	75.0%	75.0%	75%
Median Earnings Q2	\$5,800	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
Credential Rate	73.0%	65.0%	65.0%	65.0%
Measurable Skill Gain	40.0%	30.0%	35.0%	35.0%
WIOA DISLOCATED WORKER MEASURES				
Employment Q2	86.0%	X	86.0%	86.0%
Employment Q4	85.0%	X	85.0%	85.0%
Median Earnings Q2	\$8,300	\$7,800	\$7,800	\$7,800
Credential Rate	65.0%	60.0%	62.0%	62.0%
Measurable Skill Gain	40.0%	35.0%	35.0%	35.0%

WIOA YOUTH MEASURES				
<i>Employment/Education Q2</i>	81.0%	65.0%	65.0%	65.0%
<i>Employment/Education Q4</i>	74.0%	65.0%	65.0%	65.0%
<i>Median Earnings Q2</i>	\$3,500	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
<i>Credential Rate</i>	70.5%	65.0%	65.0%	70.5%
<i>Measurable Skill Gain</i>	50.0%	45.0%	45.0%	45.0%

(16) What are the actions and activities that support the local boards continued status as a high-performance workforce board?

The Berkshire Workforce Board takes pride and leadership in proactively addressing workforce issues and participating with number economic development, education and community initiatives which ultimate helps to maintain our high-performance status. Our Executive Committee and leadership team conducts an annual assessment tied to our Strategic Plan to check for progress. Annually we assess Board member responsibility (engagement and attendance), Board membership (composition of expertise and requirements), Board-management relationships, Board performance and Board leadership in the community to look for ways to improve our effectiveness.

a). What trainings are applicable to Board members?

New members receive a 2-hour orientation by the Executive Director and participate in a New Member Orientation session conducted by Board leadership. A Board Orientation for both new and veteran Board members is held annually which outlines their roles/responsibilities, funding sources, workforce programs and initiatives, Career Center programming, youth programs, and community engagement. Time is built into each Board and Committee Meeting to conduct strategic thinking, training, and high-level strategic issues that inform their decision making and provide them with talking points within their professional networks. Weekly email updates are provided to Board members to keep them fully updated and knowledgeable on workforce systems over which they make policy and financial decisions that address and help build a strong workforce system.

b). How do business Board members contribute to workforce development in your region?

Each Board member participates in at least one committee which allows them to deepen their understanding of a particular workforce development area of interest. They serve as community ambassadors to promote workforce development policies and activities throughout the community. Employer Board members participate in “Workforce Wednesdays” which helps to promote weekly workforce activities on our social media campaigns. They develop and approve the region’s workforce strategic vision, set goals, and evaluate outcomes/progress. They monitor/evaluate the career center and other workforce programming in the region. They influence and design an integrated youth system and college/career readiness system that prepares our youth for successful employment. They provide worksites for youth and specialized programming for adults. They keep the Workforce Board informed of labor market issues.

c). How does your Board support the business services in the career centers?

Board members post jobs with the Career Center, serve as members of the Evaluation Committee that monitors the Career Center and business services team, provides feedback to the Center, provides labor market data, trend analysis, and industry needs, and interviews/hires job seekers registered at the Career Center.

d). To what extent does inter-/intra-Board collaboration result in positive outcomes for job-seekers and businesses?

All of the above activities result in collaboration that ultimately supports our workforce delivery system and helps it to better serve its job seekers and business customers as well as our region's youth. The Berkshire Workforce Board's involvement on the Board and Committee level discussions and action plans are pivotal part of our performance management system from both quality/technical assistance and compliance perspectives.

(17) How will training services outlined in WIOA sec. 134 be provided through the use of individual training accounts, including, if contracts for training services will be used, how the use of such contracts will be coordinated with the use of individual training accounts under that chapter, and how your 8 Board will ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs regardless of how the training services are to be provided.

The Berkshire Workforce Board is responsible for reviewing training programs for local approval under the ITA eligibility process outlined by the state. Once courses are approved, they are included on the "State Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL)" that is available to customers at the One Stop Career Centers. As WIOA participants work with their case manager at the career center, and have been determined eligible and appropriate candidates for training, they are required to research at least two providers from the list that offer training in their desired occupation. Once a provider has been selected, the case manager identifies the funding is available and prepares an ITA request package that is submitted to the Career Center which prepares "Umbrella Contracts" with each provider that outlines the general provisions and requirements under the ITA system. An individual Face Sheet is prepared for each participant that identifies the Specific Course information and cost for the ITA.

(18) Please describe the local area strategy and service plans for utilization of the following work-based training models:

a. On-the-Job Training, including use of the Commonwealth's waiver to provide up to 90% employee wage reimbursement to businesses with fewer than 50 employees - The Berkshire Workforce Board has had good success implementing OJTs and has applied the 50% and 75% wage reimbursement formula where allowable. When the OJT is utilized, the Career Center staff provides consideration to utilize all resources available in the successful training placement.

b. Apprenticeship – The Berkshire Workforce Board are actively engaged with businesses and job seeker customers in an effort to maximize the use of apprenticeships as an effective training, placement and employee retention tool. Career Center staff works closely with the Massachusetts Department of Apprenticeship Standards to identify local businesses in non-manufacturing sectors that may also be interested participants.

c. Incumbent Worker Training – The Berkshire Workforce Board has a long history of practical experience in the development, execution, management and evaluation of priority, sector-based work-based training programs and courses for incumbent employees. Training programs are developed collectively with employers and training providers based on regional needs and are tailored to meet the needs of the incumbent worker.

d. Work Experiences (paid or unpaid) – The Berkshire Workforce Board provides work experience programming for eligible youth participating in year-round WIOA youth programs in coordination with our approved youth vendors. Additional opportunities are provided during summer employment activities through YouthWorks and our Jobs4Youth program.

e. Transitional jobs (§ 680.190 – one that provides a time-limited work experience, that is wage-paid and subsidized, and is in the public, private, or non-profit sectors for those individuals with barriers to employment who are chronically unemployed or have inconsistent work history, as determined by the Local Board. These jobs are designed to enable an individual to establish a work history, demonstrate work success in an employee-employer relationship, and develop the skills that lead to unsubsidized employment) – The Berkshire Workforce Board is not currently using this form of work-based training with our WIOA formula funds.

f. Online remediation tools (such as WorkKeys Curriculum) for OJT/apprenticeship screening in support of cultivating and demonstrating workplace competencies. i. Does the local area utilize the National Career Readiness Curriculum (NCRC) to measure job-seekers work ethic and discipline, basic skills abilities, and job-ready qualifications? - The Career Centers utilize Career Ready 101 as an assessment tool to measure basic skills abilities for the purpose of eligibility and appropriateness of training options. Depending on the OJT/Apprenticeship Occupation we may use any number of assessments or tools in consultation with the Employer that will give us the most useful information when creating a Training Plan for OJT customers or selecting the best candidate for an Apprenticeship opportunity.

(19) Please describe the process used by your Board, consistent with WIOA sec. 108(d), to provide up to a 30-day public comment period prior to submission of the plan, including an opportunity to have input into the development of your local plan, particularly for representatives of businesses, education, and labor organizations.

a). make available copies of a proposed local plan to the public through electronic and other means, such as public hearings and local news media;

b). allow members of the public to submit comments, not later than the end of the 30-day period beginning on the date on which the proposed local plan is made available;

c). include with the local plan submitted to the Governor any such comments that represent disagreement with the plan.

The Berkshire Workforce Board posted the draft 4-Year WIOA Plan on June 23, 2021 for a 30-day public comment period of June 23-July 23, 2021 on the masshireberkshire.com website, and has hard copies available at its 66 Allen Street, Pittsfield location. Notices of the posting were sent via email to the Berkshire Workforce Board, Youth Council, WIOA MOU partners, local

Mayors and town managers, and through our e-blast system which has 250 subscribers. Any and all comments received will be included in the final submission to the state.

***As of July 29, 2021, there were no comments received and no one requested or picked up or signed for a copy of the 4-year plan. ***

(20) Describe how your Career Centers are implementing and transitioning to an integrated, technology-enabled intake and case management information system for programs carried out under WIOA and by system partners.

The Berkshire Workforce Board and Career Center supports the state level work that has begun to establish and implement an integrated, technology based in-take and case management information system together with the WIOA partners across Massachusetts.

Due to our rural nature and the high cost of technology, most partners are reliant upon state guidance for technology; however, with that stated, the Community Connector program is assisting with referrals and we are using other modes to connect customers with technology.

- The Berkshire Career Center is wired for video conference which will greatly assist with statewide professional development opportunities. This will allow partners to participate in a meeting without having to drive the 2-3 hours each way and incur the expense of travel.
- The Career Center has worked with United Cerebral Palsy and has a variety of assisted technology tools at the career center for customer use.
- MRC utilizes i-pads to help teach technology
- BCAC utilizes chrome books for technical needs
- MCLA utilizes distance learning for customers
- BCC has a testing lab for the accuplacer, GED HiSet and other tests.

Our regional partners are looking for training on technology, diversity, and sensitivity training for our partners. We are also exploring ADA compliance with our respective websites to ensure that customers can understand and access services. In addition, the Berkshire Career Center hosts weekly team meetings with WIOA partners to discuss continuum of services, training, and opportunities for shared customers. WIOA partners also have office hours at the center to assist customers. WIOA partners discussed continuum of services, services for business, technology, information sharing, and staff development opportunities.

(21) Please describe how the Board will implement the Virtual Career Pathway tool locally both for customers who can be wholly served by the Virtual Tool and those who will need to request personalized assistance.

- a. How will the Virtual Tool be used once total public access is restored?*
- b. How will staff be assigned/deployed?*
- c. How will MassHire Board and Career Center leadership ensure that all staff are crossed trained to be part of process and ensure seamless customer service?*

The MHBCC management team designed and implemented a model that ensured compliance with MDSC Policy Issuance 100.082 to provide job seeker and employer a full array of career center services. Regardless of the point of entry or employment track, job seekers progress towards desired services either in-person (when allowable) or virtually. MHBCC staff is fully outfitted to provide all career center services such as intake, eligibility, and case management, access to training, placement assistance, and follow-up.

MHBCC continues to increase capacity to deliver services to job seekers and businesses virtually. All our core services are online. Customers reported that our online services allow them to meet their RESEA requirements from home as well as attended CCS from their phone. MHBCC core set of virtual services are available to individuals during the initial intake process. Goals are established to ensure the delivery of high-quality virtual services and consider how these services are made accessible for target populations. The MHBCC has best practice committee in place regarding virtual services to customers. The “Best Practice” committee meets weekly to discuss barriers and solutions for our customer and the MHBCC.

MHBCC integrated the Business Services team into the delivery of their services. They streamlined the business services access to case managers to increase placement to provide employers with the best possible talent. To this effort, the job matching is done through the Business Services unit sharing of prioritized jobs with MHBCC staff, and likewise qualified candidates are shared with the Business Services unit to inform them of the available talent pool.

To meet the changing demand, MHBCC coordinated virtual job fairs using the new virtual job fair platform, Premier Virtual Platforms, purchased by MDSC and provided to the 16 Workforce Areas. To ensure they are consistently adapting to the changing needs of the MHBCC, the Management team meets weekly with staff to share updates on new policies or procedures, discuss performance goals, program updates, and potential job leads.

The MHBCC demonstrates virtual service customer flow aligned with requirements outlined in MWI 100 DCS 08.121: MassHire Virtual Services Delivery policy. The customer flow for all whether in person or virtually, that includes triage initial assessment, and all career services follow the shared customer flow model: Career Center Seminar/ RESEA services, Assessment services (TORQ, TAB, WKC), Career Counselor; Career Action Plan (CAP), LMI Research, LMI Assessment, Job Search, Job Development, Career Workshops, WIOA Training and Referral to employment, as well as Veterans Services if needed.

The MHBCC management team reviews and follows the DCS issuance 100.821 to ensure alignment between the State, and the Career Center services and flow of customers. This model is reviewed frequently by the management team. Most services are offered to customers in person or in a virtual environment.

Once public access is restored, MHBCC will continue to offer hybrid services for both virtual and in person services. The Board and MHBCC will continue to consider the most effective way to service and interact with customers both one on one and group settings. The Board and MHBCC will ensure all staff are receive all up to date and attend ongoing trainings on virtual

services and this will also be a part of orientation for newly hired staff to ensure seamless customer service.

(22) Please describe the local policy and process that ensures priority for adult career and training services is given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient consistent with WIOA sec. 134(c)(3)(E), § 680.600 and 100 DCS 18.101.1 (Attachment C) in the absence of a priority of services policy.

- *Veterans and eligible spouses*
- *Recipients of public assistance*
- *Other low-income individuals*
- *Individuals who are basic skills deficient*

The Local Board may establish a process that also gives priority to other individuals eligible to receive such services outside the groups given priority under WIOA, provided that it is consistent with the priority of service for Veterans. Please note the local policy and process must be consistent with WIOA sec. 134(c)(3) and § 680.600 in the absence of a priority of service policy.

Priority status is established at the time of eligibility determination and priority of service will be provided to Veterans and eligible spouses who are recipients of public assistance, low income, or basic skills deficient; Recipients of public assistance, and/or basic skills deficient; Other low-income individuals (in accordance with Federal Poverty Guidelines and Lower Living Level Standard Income Levels); and Individuals who are basic skills deficient. The Berkshire Workforce Board and Berkshire Career Center adhere to the guidance set forth by the Commonwealth related to Priority of Service for adult career and training services for our national's Veterans and recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient. The Berkshire Career Center staff determine eligibility for their respective programs and services following the state and local policy when identifying access and enrollment.

The Berkshire Workforce Board and Berkshire Career Center adhere to and follow the guidance and policies established by the Commonwealth related to Priority of Service for adult career and training services for our Veterans and recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient. The Berkshire Career Center staff determines eligibility for their respective programs and services following the state and local policy when identifying access and enrollment.

XXX

WIOA Local Four-Year Plan Signatories

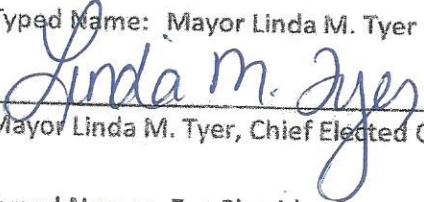
Fiscal Years 2022 - 2025

MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board (Berkshire County Regional Employment Board, Inc.)
Name of MassHire Workforce Board

This Local Four-Year Plan shall be fully executed as of the date of signatures below, and effective through June 30, 2025. The Plan may be amended or modified if agreed to by all parties.

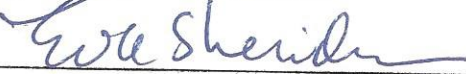
Signature indicates acceptance of the Local Four-Year Plan.

Typed Name: Mayor Linda M. Tyer




Mayor Linda M. Tyer, Chief Elected Official 6/17/21
Date

Typed Name: Eva Sheridan



MassHire Workforce Board Chair (or Designee) 6/9/21
Date

Typed Name: Heather P. Boulger



MassHire Workforce Board Director (or Designee) 6/9/21
Date

Typed Name: Melanie Gelaznik




MassHire Career Center Director 5/17/2021
Date

Typed Name: Ann Deres



MDCS Operations Manager 6/9/21
Date

Typed Name: Debra Crespo



Title I Fiscal Agent 5-7-2021
Date