



## MASSACHUSETTS WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT JOINT PARTNER COMMUNICATION

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**WIOA Joint Partner Communication 01.2017****☒ Policy   ☐ Information**

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**To:** Chief Elected Officials  
Workforce Development Board Chairs  
Workforce Development Board Directors  
WIOA Title I Administrators  
Career Center Directors  
WIOA Title I Fiscal Officers  
DCS Operations Managers  
Adult Education Providers

**From:** Rosalin Acosta, Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development  
James Peyser, Secretary of Education  
Jay Ash, Secretary of Housing and Economic Development

**Date:** September 20, 2017

**Subject:** **Regional Planning - A Workforce Skills Cabinet Initiative**

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**Purpose:** To provide guidance to workforce, education, and economic partners regarding the implementation of the regional planning process and the development and publication of Regional Labor Market Blueprints for Year 1 of regional planning (April 2017 through June 2018).

**Background:** The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was signed into law on July 22, 2014. WIOA supersedes the titles I and II of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, and amends the Wagner-Peyser Act, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. WIOA requires States to designate “regions” for the purpose of aligning workforce development activities and resources with larger regional economic development areas and available resources to provide coordinated and efficient services to both job seekers and employers.

The Governor and the Secretaries engaged Chief Elected Officials (CEOs), Local Workforce Development Boards (Local Boards), other Workforce Partners and

stakeholders to establish seven planning regions utilizing the required WIOA Regional Planning criteria.

Please see **Attachment A** for a map of the 7 planning regions and a list of the WIOA workforce areas within each region. The existing 16 WIOA workforce areas continue to serve as the policy, operations, and contracting structure for all federal workforce funding. However, the new regional planning process organizes higher-level strategic activities (data analysis, strategic planning, service mapping, etc.) for the 16 areas into a seven-region structure. Regional strategies use region-based information to identify regional service gaps and to identify what initiatives are better executed jointly over larger geographic areas.

Consistent with WIOA §106(a)(2)(B)-(C) and §679.200, the 7 planning regions are provided with labor market data and technical assistance to assist with regional planning and subsequent service delivery efforts. The requirements for the regional planning process are outlined in **Attachment B**, *Regional Plan Reference Matrix*.

The Massachusetts regional planning process, called the “Regional Workforce Skills Planning Initiative”, is a signature strategy of the Workforce Skills Cabinet (WSC). The Cabinet, created by [Executive Order No. 560](#), brings together the Secretaries of Education, Labor and Workforce Development, and Housing and Economic Development. The WSC has the task of building collaborative solutions that align Massachusetts economic, workforce and education initiatives to better meet the needs of regional economies. The WSC has developed a regional planning process that both meets WIOA requirements and serves as a key strategy to align and coordinate multi-Secretariat investments, policies, and programs.

The WSC regional planning process aligns with a number of Secretariat-level initiatives at the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (EOHED), Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD), and Executive Office of Education (EOE).

- The Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development published [“Opportunities for All”](#) the statewide economic development plan. The plan speaks to an enhanced role for EOHED and the Massachusetts Office of Business Development to connect business with Workforce Boards, One-Stop Career Centers, public post-secondary institutions, and vocational technical schools to develop talent. The WSC regional planning process will advance statewide strategies contained in “Opportunities for All” with on-the-ground leadership in the business, education, and workforce communities. The Economic Development Summit, held in October 2016, further advanced the objectives of Opportunities for All and WSC regional planning.

- The Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development published the statewide Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) [Massachusetts Combined State Plan](#) that was built from the foundation laid by “Opportunities for All” and outlined a set of strategies ensuring that our statewide workforce programs are responsive to the demands of jobseekers and business alike. Additionally, the State Plan integrates the required WIOA regional planning process into the WSC regional planning process outlined within this document. The WIOA statewide conference, held in December 2016, further advanced the objectives of the State Plan and WSC regional planning.
- The Executive Office of Education launched a new, historic, strategic framework planning process to identify statewide and regional higher education capital investment needs and funding considerations. The process reviewed facility condition and capabilities, industry collaboration as well as alignment of higher education academic programs to support workforce and economic development.

The Executive Offices will align statewide activities to integrate the economic, workforce, and higher education state-level plans into a unified WSC regional planning process, engaging leadership across major systems.

**Policy:** Integrated WSC regional planning will make use of consistent labor market analyses, regional education and workforce strategies, coordinated infrastructure and communication, and alignment of resources across partners to create strong talent pipelines that meet job seeker and business needs.

Regional leaders across three systems meet to coordinate regional planning activities and communication. In Year 1, the WSC regional planning teams will:

- Identify list of high priority occupations and sectors;
- Develop Regional Labor Market Blueprint, an action plan that reflects business engagement and need and that demonstrates how regional partners will meet skill needs of regional economies, and;
- Align existing and new resource investments in the region that impact supply and demand in the workforce.

An overview of the objectives, process and roles for various organizations is in **Attachment C**, “**Regional Planning in Massachusetts: An Initiative of the Workforce Skills Cabinet**”.

Components of Regional Labor Market Blueprints include analysis of LMI data and implementation strategies.

**Analysis:**

- Regional Industry Trends in Employment
- Demand Trends for Occupations (across industries)

- “Talent Gap”
- Career Pathway Opportunities

**Strategies:**

- Priority Industries/Occupations
- Concrete Strategies to grow talent pipelines
- Measures/Shared Accountability for Regional Priority Pipelines

**Planning Timeline – Year 1:**

Each WSC regional team will adhere to a planning timeline and produce related deliverables.

- **April 5, 2017**: WSC State Leaders Kick-Off Event, convened and organized by WSC, attended by regional partners.
- **April – May 2017**: WSC convened Regional Teams, with support of Local Workforce Development Boards, to review labor market information and form consensus agenda on priority skill needs and industry/occupational growth in region; initial Regional Labor Market Blueprint drafted.
- **May – November 2017**: Local Boards will convene three (3) to four (4) regional meetings to review and/or gather input from their business communities, update and finalize Labor Market Blueprints, and discuss and provide feedback on regional implementation of blueprint.
- **November 2017**: Regional Planning Teams convene to share drafts of Regional Labor Market Blueprint with peers, industry groups and partners, and state staff.
- **December 2017**: Regional Planning Teams convene to share draft of Regional Labor Market Blueprints with Secretaries of Labor and Workforce Development, Education, and Housing and Economic Development.
- **No later than January 31, 2018**: Regional Planning Teams submit Regional Labor Market Blueprint to Workforce Skills Cabinet and post for 30 days of public comment.
- **No later than March 2, 2018**: Public comment period concludes; final feedback or comments from WSC delivered to regions.
- **No later than March 30, 2018**: Final Regional Labor Market Blueprint due to Workforce Skills Cabinet, inclusive of public comments and feedback from WSC.

**Funding:**

Each Workforce Skills Cabinet planning region received funds to support alignment between economic development (business), education, and workforce through additional consultancy support for a) regional planning activities and b) the resulting outgrowth of strategic design to support demand-driven strategies (Demand-driven 2.0) aligned to regional planning outputs.

Funding is based on the number of local areas included in each region. Reference **Attachment D** for description of funding by region and allowable uses of funds and reporting requirements.

**Action****Required:**

**Local Boards:** The Local Boards, with the support of EOLWD, EOE, and EOHED, will be the main points of contact for the Workforce Skills Cabinet as the WSC convenes Regional Planning Teams and other stakeholders (as defined locally) for initial regional meetings. Regional Planning Teams develop Regional Labor Market Blueprints (**See Attachment E: Regional Labor Market Blueprint**) and post Blueprints for public comment. Submit Final Blueprint drafts to Marina Zhavoronkova by email no later than January 31, 2018. All narrative information should be included within the Blueprint document. ~~Aside from an Assurances and Signature page, additional documents are not required.~~ Aside from a signature page (**See Attachment F: Regional Blueprint Signature Page**), additional documents are not required.

Following the initial kick-off meeting convened by WSC, Local Boards convene at least three additional meetings to refine their regional Blueprint and further develop regional planning protocols.

Local WDBs representing each local area in the planning region must provide an opportunity for public comment on the development of the regional plan or subsequent plan modifications before submitting the plan to the Governor. To ensure adequate opportunity for public comment, refer to **Attachment B** for notification requirements. After the close of the public comment period, the Boards will vote to support/adopt the Regional Plan.

**Regional Planning Partners:** The representatives of the WSC Regional Planning partner organizations will engage with the Local Boards and WSC and support the regional efforts to develop and execute the Regional Labor Market Blueprint and all associated regional planning activities.

**Effective:** Immediately

**Inquiries:** Please contact Marina Zhavoronkova by email at [Marina.R.Zhavoronkova@MassMail.State.MA.US](mailto:Marina.R.Zhavoronkova@MassMail.State.MA.US) with any questions. Please reference the Issuance Number and Subject in the subject line of your inquiry.

**Attachments:** A: WSC Regional Map  
B: Regional and Local Plan Reference Matrix  
C: Regional Planning in Massachusetts: An Initiative of the WSC  
D: Massachusetts Regional Planning Support – Scope of Work  
E: Regional Labor Market Blueprint Template  
F: Regional Blueprint Signature Page

**References:** [WIOA Ch. 2 § 106\(a\)\(2\)\(B\)-\(C\)](#)  
[Executive Order No. 560](#)  
[WIOA Massachusetts Combined State Plan](#)  
20 CFR 679.200, 679.500, 679.510