



MassHire - Berkshire Workforce Board  
4 Year WIOA Local Plan - 2026-2029  
Submitted: July 18, 2025

In accordance with Massachusetts Department of Career Services Workforce Issuance 100 DCS 04.115, the MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board provided a 30-day public review and comment period between June 17, 2025-July 17, 2025. No public comments were received. Below are the responses as outlined in the issuance for the 4-year WIOA local plan for 2026-2029.

***1. 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 that is a timely current description of the regional economy to meet the requirements of this section. Notes: • Please include a description of infrastructure jobs such as clean energy, transportation, healthcare, education, and government.***

Today's Berkshire economy is driven by jobs in health care and social assistance (20% of jobs), government (13%), retail (12%), accommodation & food (11%), educational services (12.9%), and manufacturing (5%).

Industries that have seen the greatest amount of growth from 2019 to 2024 include Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting (208 jobs); Wholesale Trade (179 jobs); Management of Companies and Enterprises (89 jobs).

Occupations with the greatest growth from 2019 to 2024 include Business and Financial Operations (724 jobs); Computer and Mathematical (145 jobs); Farming, Fishing, and Forestry (106 jobs).

Critical Industries (main source of employment)	Emerging Industries (sectors that have long-term projected growth)	Top Training Needs
<b>Healthcare &amp; Social Assistance</b> (20%)	<b>Beverage and Tobacco Product Manufacturing</b> (55% growth)	<b>Personal skills</b> (89%)
<b>Government</b> (13%)	<b>Trade and Transportation</b> (23%)	<b>Interpersonal skills</b> (83%)
<b>Retail Trade</b> (12%)	<b>Management</b> (20%)	<b>Basic Skills</b> (79%)
<b>Accommodation &amp; Food</b> (11%) <b>Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation</b> (4%)	<b>Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation</b> (15%)	<b>Thinking skills</b> (71%)
<b>Educational Services</b> (6%)	<b>Utilities</b> (17%)	<b>Resource skills</b> (63%)
<b>Manufacturing</b> (5%) <b>Construction</b> (5.8%)	<b>Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting</b> (11%) <b>Crop Production</b> (17%)	
Source: Lightcast WDA Report, 2024	Source: DER data 2025	

Compared to national averages, industries with higher than average concentrations of employment here include arts, entertainment and recreation; educational services; 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 utilities, information, finance/insurance and professional, scientific, and technical services (\$100K and above).

As identified in the 2025 Berkshire Skills Blueprint, the following are our priority industries:

- Healthcare and Social Assistance (62)
- Manufacturing and Engineering (32)
- Hospitality, Culinary, and Management (72)
- Clean Energy and Trades (61)
- Education and Childcare (23)

### **Healthcare and Social Assistance (62)**

As the largest and fastest growing industry in the Berkshires, Health Care and Social Assistance is vital to the Berkshire economy. Healthcare and Social Assistance is the number one industry in Berkshire County with over 12,000 employees in the field. The average earnings per job is \$73,617. Although data shows there is an excess supply over demand, there is still a great need for educated and trained individuals to fill open positions. Healthcare and Social Assistance continues to be a growing industry and offers a strong career pathway for workers in entry-level positions.

### **Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering (32)**

Manufacturing is one of the Region's top five largest industries. It is aligned with the Region's economic development plan, offers career pathways, and includes high growth/wage occupations. This industry alone has generated over \$301 million in regional earnings during 2022. Retirement risk in this industry is very high, creating a high demand for workers.

### **Hospitality, Culinary, and Management (72)**

This industry is vital in supporting the Berkshire's Creative Economy. There are opportunities here for career pathway expansion, all which lead to higher pay and greater skill development. The Berkshires is a renowned cultural and natural destination with a high location quotient for Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation (2.39 in 2023) and Hotels and Accommodations (2.89 in 2023). Throughout the county there are a wide variety of resorts, hotels, cultural institutions, and outdoor recreation destinations.

### **Education and Childcare (61)**

There is a growing need for workers in the Education and Childcare field, which can be seen in supply gaps among the selected industry occupations. Currently, Berkshire County educators have aligned program offerings to meet this need and are providing a career pathway to advance educators. Education places within the top 5 for largest industry in Berkshire County and is the second industry with the highest rate of projected growth. Childcare facilities are in greater demand and access to childcare is often a barrier for those looking to re-enter the workforce.

### **Clean Energy and Trades (23)**

With a projected growth in the Clean Energy sector, it is important for Berkshire County to highlight the current and future occupational demand in this industry. There is a supply gap of trades people which must be addressed to prepare the region for future growth in Clean Energy. In July 2023,

MassCEC released the Massachusetts Clean Energy Workforce Needs Assessment. In the report, it was projected that Berkshire County will see an additional 500 new clean energy jobs added to the region by 2030. This rate of growth is significant at 31%. Various employers have already begun to expand their services into the Clean Energy field to strengthen clean energy services. This includes oil companies expanding to heat pump installations; auto services expanding their services to include EV and hybrid vehicles; and an increased number of contractors and electricians to support the electrification of the economy. Additionally, the following occupations have been identified to be at severe risk of bottleneck: Electricians, HVAC-R Mechanics and Installers, and Construction Laborers.

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

The top specialized skills/training employers need based on job postings include nursing, merchandising, medication administration, and housekeeping.

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 55 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 reimage

the region with a focus on the creative and innovative economy with many new start-ups and makerspaces being developed.

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 stakeholders and then determines training necessary to carry out these functions;

Past employer feedback 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 the ability to keep composure in the workplace. Other common employers 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 to pass a CORI.
- Employers need job seekers to have financial literacy and be able to pass a financial backgroundcheck.
- Job seekers should have good customer service skills and know how to work in teams.

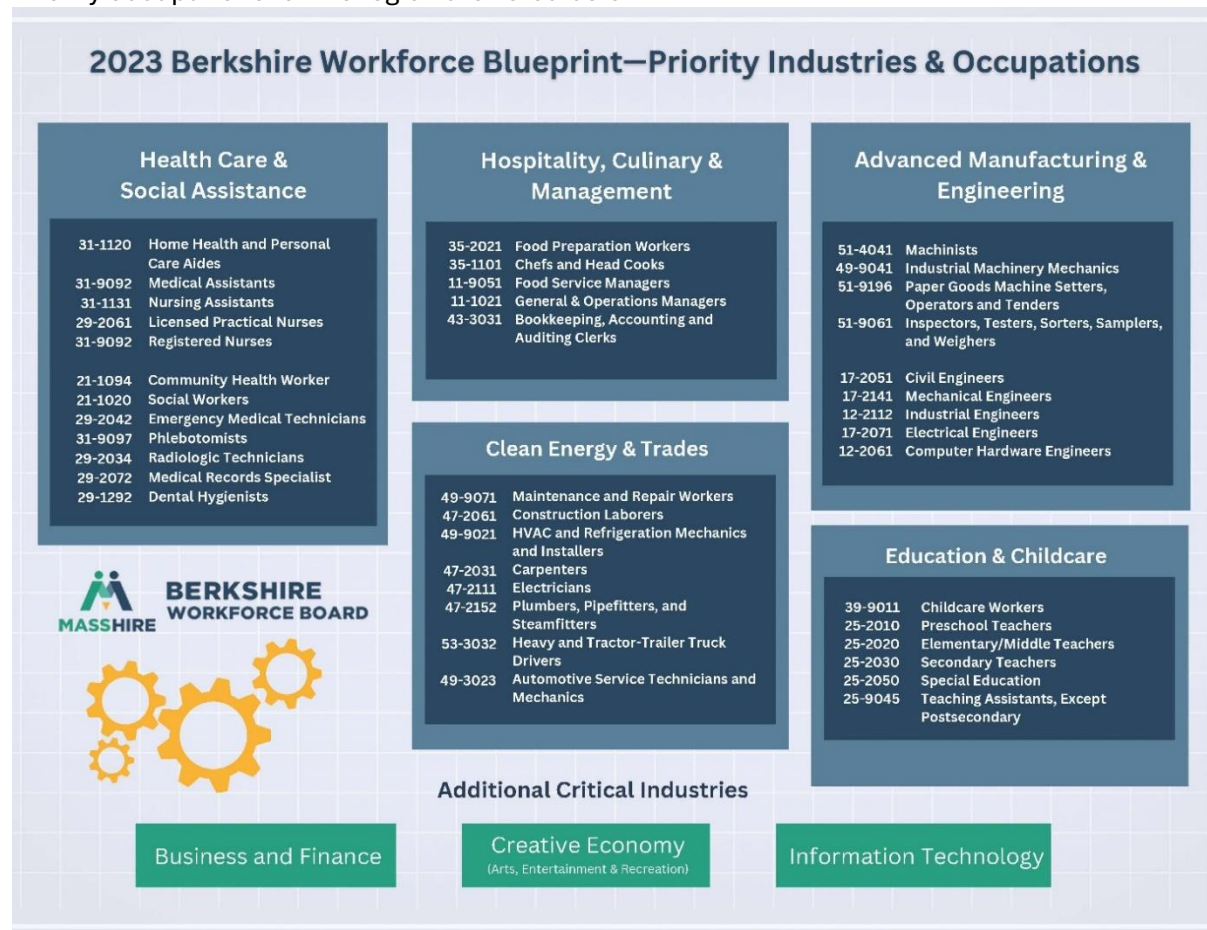
Employers also felt there was a generational gap. Youth that are more oriented to technology but lack critical thinking skills and experience working in teams. Employers feel that the younger generation has:

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

Priority occupations for the region are listed below:



*(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.*

As of 2024, the population in Berkshire County has grown to 127,017. Contrary to this 1.8% growth in population since 2019, total jobs have declined since 2019 at a rate of 4.7% while labor force participation has also declined at a rate of 4.8%.

While Berkshire County contains 8.96% of the land in the Commonwealth, its share of the population is only 1.83%. Furthermore, Berkshire County has a population density of 133.1 people/sq. mi. compared to a Commonwealth average of 650.5 people/sq. mi., making it the fourth least densely populated county in Massachusetts. The total population in Berkshire County consists of 52% females and 48% males. The percentage of females to males is similar to surrounding regions, the Commonwealth, and the United States (BRPC 2023 CEDS).

There are three trends that have been identified regarding regional demographics in Berkshire County: aging population, low rate of millennials, and low racial diversity.

Berkshire County's millennial population (ages 25-39) is much lower than the state and national average. With 20,864 residents in this age bracket, the Berkshires is lacking a supply of young talent needed to meet the demand of vacancies caused by high retirement rates. More than a third of the population (53,173) is aged 55 and older, which means a significant portion of the workforce will be retiring over the next decade. The current population of Berkshire County is predominately white at 87% of the population. By 2033, this number is expected to decrease to 83%, while an increase in racial diversity is predicted.

Nearly 21% of the Berkshire County population holds a bachelor's degree, which is about 0.9% lower than the national average. However, 8.2% hold an associate's degree which is about 0.6% below the national average, and an additional 18.5% of the population has a graduate degree or higher, which is about 9 percentage points higher than the national average at 9% of the population.

As of April 2025, the labor force was 64,073. Of the total labor force, 61,073 were employed and 3,000 were unemployed. Common barriers to employment include transportation challenges, childcare challenges, and health/personal challenges.

***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 activities. b) address the capacity to provide workforce development activities around: i. education and skill needs of the workforce; ii. individuals with barriers to employment; iii. employment needs of businesses. c) describe the local area's work with community colleges and Career Technical Initiatives, etc.***

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 pathways/pipelines, 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 pathways 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. Berkshire Initiative for Growth – strategies to attract/retain millennials.
- 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:

- Berkshire Workforce Board Health Care Collaborative – convenes annually to identify recruitment and retention strategies
- Berkshire Workforce Board Advanced Manufacturing Partnership – convenes twice annually to identify recruitment and retention strategies and training opportunities.
- Berkshire STEM
- Customer Service Training through National Retail Federation to gear up for new customer service positions

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. 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.

The Berkshire Workforce Board works closely with Berkshire Community College on various workforce initiatives including eighth grade career fairs, healthcare training partnerships. Advanced manufacturing partnerships, and supports various workforce activities such as re-entry job fairs and education.

The Board has also been a close partner to our two regional vocational schools, McCann Tech and Taconic High School, as they applied for the CTI planning and implementation grants. The Board assisted both schools in developing a close working relationship with the MassHire Berkshire Career Center, supported technical training proposals, and assisted where needed throughout the application and implementation process.

***(4) Please describe the MassHire board's strategic vision to support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency (Please refer to the MA Workforce Agenda, Focus Area II for details). Include goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce (including youth, UI claimants, and individuals with barriers to employment), and goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on performance indicators described in § 677.155(a)(1).***

As outlined as part of our FY25-FY26 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 develop partnerships, generate resources, and advocate for workforce solutions that result in a skilled workforce, prospering businesses, and equitable access to meaningful career pathways and quality employment for residents and youth.

The MassHire Berkshire workforce Board's vision is a thriving, inclusive, and resilient regional economy where businesses, residents and youth have equitable access to workforce development resources and to quality employment opportunities. We envision a better future for people, youth, and businesses of Berkshire County through meaningful work and sustainable growth.



As a leaders in workforce development, Berkshire Workforce Board is committed to having Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion embedded into the programs and services we offer, reflected in the people we impact and our workplace culture.

Berkshire Workforce Board helps employers build a competitive advantage by using data-driven, tailored grants designed to maximize impact with a focus on empowering diverse communities to solve their biggest workforce challenges. These programs aim to equip current and future generations with the tools they need to succeed in the marketplace by strategically investing in today's most pressing workforce needs while creating a more equitable and accessible society. Incumbents and unemployed workers can each access the resources and networks they need to grow their career.

Berkshire Workforce Board creates opportunities for youth and young adults to define an early career trajectory and reach their highest potential. Through a mix of in-person, hybrid, and virtual work experiences, innovative programming, dynamic partnerships, and comprehensive work readiness training, we meet the emerging needs of employers and foster career exploration for participants. Our hands-on career readiness curriculum, combined with tangible outcomes, supports participants in gaining sustainable and fulfilling employment.

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.

***(5) Considering the analysis described above, please describe your strategy to work with the entities that carry out the core programs and workforce system partners to align available resources to achieve the strategic vision and goals described in paragraph (4) 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. The Berkshire Workforce Board has always been known for its partnerships between agencies, organizations, and private sector businesses, and for its ability to develop solutions to our workforce challenges in a rural community. Our multi-agency WIOA partner MOU meets quarterly to align and integrate resources and services. DTA, MassAbility, and other WIOA partners meet regularly at the Career Center which has resulted in a mutual commitment by all and a refreshed vision for an integrated system. Our community college and vocational schools have worked with the Board and Career Centers to design and offer specialized training opportunities for adults and youth; and Adult Basic Education Partners have reached out for assistance with career exploration and advising to be career pathway oriented.

We have met consistently with our WIOA Partners to build relationships and to determine ways for us to improve to best meet the needs of our collective customers.

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

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

*a. Please list all programs included in your local workforce system such as Apprenticeship and ESOL.*

- **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.)
  - Pittsfield Adult Learning Center
  - Berkshire Community College Adult Learning Program
  - Northern Berkshire Adult Education Program
  - English for Employment provided by the Career Center
  - Literacy Network of South Berkshire
  - Literacy Volunteers of Berkshire County
  - Registered Apprenticeship program offered with Berkshire Community College and NAMC

**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

The Berkshire Career Center provides priority of service for priority populations for individualized career services. In addition, Berkshire operates a DTA CIES program to provide work readiness training, occupational training, and job placement assistance to TANF recipients and SNAP recipients. Veterans can receive special services through WIOA, Ticket to Work, and DVOP services. Youth receive work readiness and work-based learning through Connecting Activities, YouthWorks, and WIOA Youth programs. In addition, the region collaborates with educational institutions and employers to develop and implement career pathway training programs for occupations in high demand by employers.

*b. How your Board will support the strategies identified in the State Plan/MA Workforce Agenda and work with the entities carrying out core programs and other workforce development programs, including programs of study authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and*

***Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.) to support service alignment. Please refer to the MA Workforce Agenda, Focus Area IV for details regarding Workforce System Infrastructure.***

BWB plans to continue expanding a collaborative workforce system to support key strategies outlined in the Massachusetts Workforce Agenda and WIOA State Plan. BWB will work with partners to implement core programs and other workforce programs in the following areas:

- Oversight of the WIOA Partner MOU with core partners. BWB will convene quarterly and work with partners to implement strategies to effectively serve shared customers and ensure access to business and employment resources for all partners.
- Track and evaluate the outcomes for individuals who are served through the MOU who face barriers to employment.
- Convene and facilitate industry committees and Board subcommittees. BWB will continue to be an active convener in the Berkshire region for industry sector training opportunities and career pathway development.
- Continue our collaboration efforts to build and expand relationships to develop a coordinated service delivery strategy.
- Coordination and integration of youth programs, including Perkins programs, WIOA youth, Connecting Activities, STEM, Innovation Pathways, and YouthWorks.
- Expand Career Technical Training and adult training opportunities in the Berkshires.

***(2) Please describe how your Board will work with entities carrying out core programs to: (Please refer to the MA Workforce Agenda, Focus Area II for details.)***

***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 for one-on-one assistance.

***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 MassAbility, Department of Transitional Assistance, 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 co-located 2 times per week at the Career Center to assist customers, at this time DTA staff also have team meetings to review service strategies for shared clients.

MassAbility formerly known as (MRC) is located in the same building as the Career Center and is stationed at the Career Center twice a month and has team meetings at the Career Center to review employment plans of mutual shared clients. Exchange information on program eligibility, training guidelines, placement resources and seek additional areas in which to work together. MassAbility and the Career Center have already established mechanisms for and practice of cost-sharing on training for mutual clients (e.g. CDL training).

MassAbility formerly known as (MRC) is located in the same building as the Career Center and is stationed at the Career Center twice a month and has team meetings at the Career Center to review employment plans of mutual shared clients. Exchange information on program eligibility, training guidelines, placement resources and seek additional areas in which to work together. MassAbility and the Career Center have already established mechanisms for and practice of cost-sharing on training for mutual clients (e.g. CDL training).

MassAbility has initiated monthly meetings with Adult Learning Center staff to collaborate on employment planning for mutual clients. MassAbility 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 MassAbility 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 MassAbility 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 an ongoing collaboration with MassAbility and the Career Center regarding academic accommodation. There is a referral process in place with the Navigator.

MassHire Berkshire Career Center along with MassAbility refers potential customers for the SCSEP program directly to the Executive office of Aging and Independence for employment and training programs.

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 Certified Nursing Assistant, Nursing Assistant, Nursing LPN, Medical Assistant, medical coding/billing, home health, 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 addresses 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 (Please refer to the MA Workforce Agenda, Focus Area II (Talent Development) and Focus Area IV – Improve “front door” experiences for both jobseekers and employers.):***

***a. To facilitate engagement of businesses in workforce development programs, including small businesses and businesses in high-demand industry sectors and occupations.***

The Board and Career Center engages businesses in two ways. First, as customers to connect businesses in our region to Career Center and MA BizWorks services, to determine business individual and industry sector needs in the region via interviews or focus groups, and to create a business services plan to 10 address the needs of individual businesses. Secondly, the Career Center engages businesses/employers in development of new training and workforce development programs to ensure responsiveness to industry sector needs. The majority of establishments in the Berkshire region are small businesses, and in-demand sectors receive high priority for program development or business engagement.

***b. To serve agricultural businesses including plans to improve services.***

Agriculture is a secondary priority industry sector in the Berkshire Workforce Area. Berkshire CC connects farmworkers to agricultural positions. When opportunities arise, BWB and Berkshire CC apply for career pathway funds to support training for agricultural workers. As part of our outreach efforts, we will survey and conduct a focus group with the agricultural sector to more fully understand the hiring and training needs of agricultural employers.

***c. To support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses.***

The Workforce Board will continue to engage businesses, especially in priority industry sectors on the Board, with our industry training opportunities, promote recruitment and retention efforts, and connect to career center services and the BizWorks team. An employer demand-driven system is our primary goal.

***d. To better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development.***

BWB and Berkshire CC participate in regional economic development work groups including but not limited to W. MA Regional Biz Works, Economic Developers meetings, Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, Berkshire Practitioner’s meetings, and Workforce Board and Career Center staff regularly attend Chamber meetings in the region and conduct joint business outreach visits.

***e. To strengthen linkages between reemployment assistance and unemployment insurance programs.***

Unemployment navigational assistance staff is located at the MassHire 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 services and programs that might be of assistance to their needs.

***f. Describe how your Board coordinates 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 other 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 or onsite with the employer, methods of outreach, listings of impacted persons to contact, and specifics on grant resources available (WIOA, CTI, WCTF, 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 and more localized collaboration meetings.

***g. Please describe procedures to offer MassHire Career Center Business Services 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. The Workforce Board and Career Center have an electronic employer newsletter and continuous social media presences to showcase local initiatives and celebrate outcomes. 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 Representatives, the Workforce Board Director, our Manager Industry Relations) 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 specialized 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 Berkshire Career Center and Workforce Board also collaborate on many projects that target the Healthcare and Behavioral Health sectors with trainings for Certified Nursing Assistant, Licensed Practical Nurse, EMT and Certified Clinical Medical Assistant.

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 reviews 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. Describe implementation of any 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(3)(b) of this section.***

***(4) Please provide a description of how your Board: (Please refer to the MA Workforce Agenda, Focus Area IV.)***

***a. Coordinates local workforce investment activities with regional economic development activities.***

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 2025 report to assisting town managers with companies in transition (growth or reduction) to 1Berkshires' update of the Berkshire Blueprint 3.0 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" 2 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 will

create 100 jobs in 2026 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.

***b. Promotes entrepreneurial skills training and micro-enterprise services.***

BWB and Berkshire Career Center have strong partnerships with our entrepreneurial programs in the region ranging from EforAll, Lever, Berkshire Innovation Center, and 1Berkshire. Cross sharing of information and marketing occurs.

***(5) Please describe the MassHire Career Center system in your area, including: (Please refer to the MA Workforce Agenda, Focus Area III – Leadership by Example.)***

***a. How the Board ensures the continuous improvement of eligible providers and that such providers will meet the employment needs of local businesses, workers and job seekers.***

BWB has implemented policies to ensure the continuous improvement throughout the workforce system. The training provider completes monthly progress reports, creates shared performance charts, and maintains performance measures in collaboration with the career center to track performance. Customers complete satisfaction surveys which are entered into the MOSES system. Management reviews these quarterly and addresses any areas of concern.

***b. How the Board facilitates access to services provided through the MassHire Career Center(s), including in remote areas, using virtual services, technology and other means.***

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 Thursday 9AM-4PM on Friday and at the North Adams library on Tuesday from 10AM-3PM. The Center has developed their web access functionality to enable both Job seekers and employers the ability to access services electronically. Examples include hybrid workshops for Resume, Interview, Career Center Seminar, 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 virtual meeting capabilities. Additionally, social media (Facebook, LinkedIn and Constant Contact email notifications and texting) are utilized to inform both Jobseeker and Business customers about events and programs that might be of interest to them.

***c. How entities within the MassHire Career Center system, including Career Center Operators and Partners, ensure compliance with WIOA sec. 188 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, and adapted computer screens and ADA track mouse. 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 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 MassAbility, 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.

***d. The roles and resource contributions of your Partners – please describe how these relationships are sustained and kept productive.***

BWB convenes WIOA partners on a quarterly basis to ensure that roles and responsibilities are clear and that strategies are developed and implemented to move the work of the MOU forward to ensure the effectiveness of a shared customer process combined with business services delivery model. BWB takes the lead in overseeing the implementation of shared infrastructure contributions.

***(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 programs and 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 navigational 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,
- financial literacy services and develop 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 services 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 gain marketable credentials to meet today's in-demand occupations to enter the workforce and retain employment. Training may be made available to eligible individuals after an interview, comprehensive assessment, evaluation, and career planning to determine that the individual requires training to obtain employment that leads to economic self-sufficiency or to remain employed. Training services may be made available to either an employed, unemployed or dislocated worker who meet WIOA title 1 eligibility. 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 and not entitlement. Customer must exhaust all other grant and funding 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 in Berkshire County as a core component of the Career Center service delivery system. The Career Center’s coordinated business Service team provides Employer Services to all Berkshire County employers (except for the Cannabis Industry due to federal regulations), 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. Please include an identification of successful models of such activities. (Please describe how local strategies align with Focus Area II – Talent Development Strategies for Youth)***

***a. Please also provide a description of youth workforce investment activity coordination with the Department of Transitional Assistance, MassAbility and Massachusetts Commission for the Blind.***

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 14-24 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 14 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, Seven Hills Child Care Resources, Berkshire Community Action Council, Department of Transitional Assistance and MassAbility.

Supportive Services are essential to the success of youth who face barriers in transportation, childcare 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 childcare, winter coats, and school supplies, bus passes 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 MassAbility 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 or The Young Parent Program (YPP)
- 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 MassAbility to ensure their special needs are being met when conducting Career Pathway and Job Search activities.
- MassAbility collaborations for in school youth includes co-enrollment in the Pre-Employment Trainings Services (Pre-ETS) that assist youth ages 14-24 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 MassAbility to assist with employment readiness.

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

BWB and Berkshire CC convene with Berkshire Community College monthly to strategize opportunities and solutions to best assist customers. Co-enrollment in multiple programs is encouraged. Approximately 20% of career center customers are co-enrolled.

***(9) How does the Board coordinate WIOA title I workforce investment activities with the provision of transportation and other appropriate supportive services in the local area? Please include a description of how other programs and services in your local area are leveraged to complement 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, (BRTA received a grant to provide fixed route and ADA services free to all customers from November 29, 2024 until September 30, 2025) .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 support 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 registered with 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 process. Customers are encouraged to use the Resource Room for job search/application, resume writing, labor market data research, and profile completion in 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 have developed a customer team process which is a collaborative approach involving key program staff who meet weekly 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 are career and training services required under WIOA, provided to Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFWs) through the MassHire 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) Please describe how the Board coordinates WIOA title I workforce investment activities with adult education and literacy activities under WIOA title II. This description must include how the Board carries 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:***

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.***

Pamela Wojtkowski, Berkshire Training & Employment, Inc. (BTE) and MassHire Berkshire Career Center, 160 North Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, Pittsfield, MA 01201. (413) 499-2220  
[pwojtkowski@masshireberkshirecc.com](mailto:pwojtkowski@masshireberkshirecc.com).

***(14) Please describe the competitive process that is used to award the subgrants and contracts for WIOA title I activities.***

The procurement process is managed by the staff of the BWB under the direction and oversight of the Executive Committee. BWB follows local procurement policy in alignment with DCS procurement policies and regulations. The Review Committee and staff develop the initial procurement plan for the region. Following the pre-qualification process and the proposal review, recommendations for the selection of service provider(s) are made by the Review Committee. Following the review process and approval by the Review committee, a recommendation is forwarded to the full Board, and the final approval lies with the members of the Berkshire Workforce Board.

***(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 local performance goals. The link must be accessible to ACLS bidders.***

FY2025 WIOA requires States use the statistical adjustment model to adjust local levels of performance to reflect the actual economic conditions experienced and the characteristics of the participants served. No target goals were negotiated.

WIOA - LOCAL AREA FY2025 PERFORMANCE GOALS REQUEST FORM			
CONTACT PERSON / EMAIL:		Heather Boulger / heather@masshireberkshire.com	
WORKFORCE BOARD NAME:		Berkshire	
A  PERFORMANCE MEASURE	FY2025 <input checked="" type="radio"/> Use FY2025 Target Goals (SAM) <input type="radio"/> Propose Some or All <input type="radio"/> 2025 Goals New FY20		
	B FY 2025 STATE GOAL	C FY 2025 LOCAL TARGET GOAL (\$AM)	D FY2025 NEW PROPOSE LOCAL GOAL
<b>WIOA ADULT MEASURES</b>			
Employment Q2	73.5%	76.8%	
Employment Q4	75.0%	76.9%	
Median Earnings Q2	\$7,900	\$7,498	
Credential Rate	68.0%	67.8%	
Measurable Skill Gains	41.5%	53.1%	
<b>WIOA DISLOCATED WORKER MEASURES</b>			
Employment Q2	78.0%	72.4%	
Employment Q4	81.0%	72.4%	
Median Earnings Q2	\$12,000	\$12,703	
Credential Rate	70.0%	81.0%	
Measurable Skill Gains	45.0%	45.0%	
<b>WIOA YOUTH MEASURES</b>			
Employment/Education Q2	75.0%	62.7%	
Employment/Education Q4	72.0%	70.9%	
Median Earnings Q2	\$4,500	\$4,088	
Credential Rate	60.0%	53.5%	
Measurable Skill Gains	45.0%	52.1%	

***(16) What are the actions and activities that support the MassHire Board's 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 provided 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. Board members complete the state conflict/ethical training as well.

***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 are the training services outlined in WIOA sec. 134 provided using individual training accounts? If contracts for training services are or will be used, how is/will the use of such contracts coordinated with the use of individual training accounts?***

***a) How does the Board ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs regardless of how the training services are 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 that 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 contract is prepared for each participant that identifies the Specific Course information and cost for the ITA.

***(18) Please describe how training services under chapter 3 of subtitle B will be provided in accordance with section 134(c)(3)(G), including, if contracts for the training services will be used, how the use of such contracts will be coordinated with the use of individual training accounts (ITA) under that chapter and how the local board will ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs regardless of how the training services are to be provided.***

Training Services will be provided through Individual Training Accounts in accordance with the Berkshire Workforce Board ITA Training policy. Contracted Training will be utilized, only when one (or more) of the five exceptions identified in 680.320 applies. Enrolled adults and

dislocated workers work with Career Services Counselors to determine skills gaps and training needs and identify an appropriate training that will lead to sustainable employment.

*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.

*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.

*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.

*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.

***(19) Please describe the process the Board uses, consistent with WIOA sec. 108(d), to provide up to 30-days 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.***

The 4-Year Plan is posted directly to the [www.massshireberkshire.com](http://www.massshireberkshire.com) website and all notifications are sent to WIOA Partners, Board members and community leaders. The BWB notifies via email and on their social media accounts and website when the 4-Year Plan is available for public comment. Included are the start and end dates of the public comments period and where to submit comments. All comments will be incorporated into the plan.

***(20) Describe progress made implementing and transitioning to an integrated, technology-enabled intake, referral, and case management information system for WIOA Partner Shared Customers.***

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.

- The Berkshire Career Center utilizes virtual platforms such as Zoom, Webex, and Owl equipment for both smaller and larger group partner meetings and/or state professional development trainings. This allows partners and staff to participate in a meeting without having to drive 2-3 hours each way, incur the expense of travel and fosters greater participation.

- The Career Center has worked with United Cerebral Palsy and has a variety of assisted technology tools at the career center for customer use.
- MassAbility 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 bi-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.

*Note: A response to this section is only necessary if your local area currently has a model in place for an integrated case management system for WIOA Partner Shared Customers.*

*The Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development's (EOLWD) Office of Workforce Innovation leads statewide efforts to modernize the Massachusetts workforce system by strengthening data use, enhancing technology, and upgrading systems to better serve staff, jobseekers, and employers. These efforts include implementing and transitioning to an integrated, technology-enabled intake, referral, and case management information system for WIOA Partner*

*Shared Customers. EOLWD's Office of Workforce Innovation engages in workforce system modernization efforts on behalf of the 16 local workforce areas.*

*(21) Please describe the local policy and processes that ensure priority for adult career and training services are 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). Please ensure response aligns with MA Workforce Agenda Focus Area I.*

- *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](#).*

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.

*(22) Please add any additional information or elements, as it pertains to your area and overall strategy, to align with the four Focus Areas outlined in the MA Workforce Agenda that may not have been addressed and responded to via the WIOA Sec 108 4-Year Plan requirements.*

MassHire Berkshire will continue to build on the MassHire State Workforce Board's vision and mission, the Healey-Driscoll Administration's Workforce Agenda, and WIOA State Plan which focuses on the following four areas:

- **Focus Area I: Talent Attraction and Retention** - For the Commonwealth to be a leader in attracting and retaining talent, Massachusetts must reduce barriers to employment as a critical strategy that will increase labor market participation, especially among underrepresented and underserved populations, and foster a more equitable workforce.
- **Focus Area II: Talent Development** - As Massachusetts invests in talent pipelines and career pathways for residents, it is imperative that workforce strategies align with industry hiring demands expressed by employers today and projected by employers for future in-demand occupations across the state. With the goal of strengthening Massachusetts' talent pipelines, a collaborative workforce system needs to prepare future talent and create upskilling pathways for workers through effective education and training models that will fuel priority industries and occupation.
- **Focus Area III: Leadership by Example** - Massachusetts has a tremendous opportunity to strengthen and scale effective strategies, programming, and resources to develop untapped talent especially with the Governor and Executive Branch leading by example, and the Commonwealth as the largest employer in Massachusetts.
- **Focus Area IV: Workforce System Infrastructure** - Massachusetts needs to modernize and strengthen the infrastructure and coordination across the MassHire public workforce system to improve support for jobseekers and employers.

Additionally, as the MassHire State Workforce Board serves as a convening body to influence and support Massachusetts' Workforce Agenda, the Board should also ensure alignment as a resource for the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development to engage Board members, regional workforce partners, and more.

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